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THE WOMAN FROM WOLVERTON

ISABEL GORDON CURTIS

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THE WOMAN FROM WOLVERTON

THE WOMAN FROM WOLVERTON

A STORY OF WASHINGTON LIFE

BY

ISABEL GORDON CURTIS

L. C.

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THE CENTURY CO.
1912

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F

I DEDICATE THESE CHAPTERS TO THE WIVES OF AMERICAN CONGRESSMEN, AMONG WHOM ARE WOMEN — NOT ONE BUT MANY — AS HOME-LOVING, PATRIOTIC, HELPFUL AND LOYAL AS THE WOMAN FROM WOLVERTON.

I. G. C.

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THE
WOMAN FROM WOLVERTON

THE WOMAN FROM WOLVERTON

I

THE NOMINATION

ONE night, five years ago, as I sat mending a pair of small shabby pants, the door was thrown open and my husband dashed in. I thought of bad news, but he took a look at my anxious face, laughed, then bent down and kissed me.

I felt my cheeks flush hotly. During twenty years of humdrum married life a husband's lover-like ways are apt to be forgotten. *He* seldom thinks of it, but the wife does many a time. Lemuel took the worn little trousers from my hands, flung them into the workbasket and pushed it aside. He laughed again, drew a chair up to the table, laid his arms upon it and stared at me. His face was radiant. For a second I thought he had been drinking. Still, in all my life I had never seen my husband the worse for liquor.

"What 's the matter, Lem?" I asked.

He took both my hands between his own. "Polly," he said gravely, "how would you like to be a congressman's wife?"

"A congressman's wife!" I repeated perplexedly. "I don't believe, Lem, I should like it. Why?"

"If things go through as they began to-night, that is what you are slated for, little woman."

I was so astonished, I sat for a moment in silence, staring at my husband. His face had actually changed. Lines graven on it by the toil and anxiety of long, hard years seemed to have faded out. He looked like the laughing, mischievous boy, who used to sit behind me in school, thirty years ago. Suddenly he leaned over and poked the fire into a blaze. He was too excited to keep still.

"Does it mean, Lem, we would have to go to Washington to live?"

"That is what it would mean, dear. It would mean a career for me, and for you, too; a big place in the political world, and a circle where the children can grow up to be somebody. It will be mighty different from Wolverton."

"We have been very happy in Wolverton, Lem." For one dreadful moment I felt as if home were slipping away from under my feet.

"Yes," there was a tone of disdain in his voice, "as happy as a man can be boating in a pond when he wants to be sailing the broad ocean."

"Tell me, Lem," I asked perplexedly, "what happened?"

My husband has a way of getting to his feet when he is excited. He tossed off his coat and began to walk about the room.

"There was a convention over at Cottonwood to-night," he began. "Kershaw tried to nominate Decker again. The majority turned him down—

flat. My name was put up, and in ten minutes the nomination went through. They had suggested Weed of Pipestem and Kline of Panola, then at the last moment I was trotted out — a dark horse. It fairly took me off my feet."

"You said yesterday that Decker would get the nomination."

"I did not realize how he is hated in some quarters. He lost ground fearfully last session. He broke a lot of pledges. My idea is that he's plumb lazy. Mrs. Decker hasn't helped the situation. She hurt him in all sorts of ways. She snubbed women whose husbands helped elect him last campaign. That lost some votes. It is simply a case of the high nose with her. That isn't your style, old woman."

"A high nose would ruin my looks altogether," I confessed. "But won't there be a strong Democrat running against you?"

"Shelby of Live Oak is the Democratic nominee; only, sentiment is strong against him; he's had so much corporation work."

"You never did corporation work, did you, Lem?"

"No," he laughed. "I never had the chance. I would probably have snapped at it if it had been offered. Pure luck kept it from me. Nothing counts these days against a man who is politically ambitious like a corporation job."

"I would n't set my heart on election if I were you," I advised.

"You don't know much about it, little woman," he said cheerfully. "In this district a Republican nom-

ination is much the same as an election. Say, don't bother with that mending, Polly; get Bob new breeches to-morrow. The tight-wad days are almost over, thank goodness." Then he tossed a bill upon the table.

I laughed, but picked up my work again, and the needle flew in and out while Lem walked the room, laying plans for the future.

"This scrap of a room is like Wolverton," he grumbled. "I can't take five steps across it. If it were not pitch dark I would go out and tramp." For an hour I listened to his outpouring of plans. Lemuel was close to the door of the White House when I interrupted him.

"I thought a congressman's one thought was the good of his country?" I suggested.

"So it is. Only, no matter how much patriotism a man has, he must think first of himself and his family."

Then he sat down, pulled a bunch of papers from his pocket, and began to read. The lamp started to smoke; he was so deep in politics he did not notice when I trimmed it. I sat there stitching and thinking, not so much of the future as of the past. My thoughts went back to the beginning of our lives together; to our simple wedding in the little Baptist church. We would rather have had the ceremony at home, only Lemuel and I had taught so long in Wolverton that everybody wanted to see us married, and they could not be crowded into mother's little house. Since Lem was a boy he had been eager to take up law, but it meant money he did n't have, so instead he

began to teach. All the time he was studying, and before we married, he passed his examinations. We did not go on a wedding trip; that could not be afforded so Lemuel just moved over to mother's home and there were three of us to keep house instead of two.

A week later he hung out his shingle on Main street. Country folks may feel like going to law, but it is a luxury they can't often indulge in, so at first Lemuel's practice did not amount to much. Reuben Marshall had grown up with Wolverton, and about all the law work needed in Keith county went to him. I knew it would take a while to make good, so without saying anything to Lem, I asked the committee to hold the school for me. In the fall I went back to teaching. Lem was terribly set against it, but he soon owned up that we could n't have lived any other way. That first year about all he took in just paid the office rent. Old Marshall grew so rheumatic he could not walk, so he sent for Lem one day and asked him to go into partnership. That made things a bit easy, and I gave up the school for little Densie was coming.

I said "easy." It never was easy. The children kept coming. We wanted them, and welcomed them, and loved them, but there were days when I wondered how they were to be fed and clothed. The year Bob was born — it was a panic year, I remember — all we had to live on was three hundred dollars. We owned our little home; mother left us that when she died. Lemuel was always looking for great things

to happen. He planned them so often that somehow I felt over Congress as I had about other schemes.

Suddenly he looked up from his paper. "I did n't tell you, Polly, who put my nomination through. It was an old friend of yours."

"An old friend of mine!"

"Yes — Senator Trent."

"Senator Trent! Why, Lem, I never met him but once, and I 've always felt like apologizing for that once."

"He called me to his room at the Wolf's Head this afternoon and had a talk before things happened. 'Shipe,' says he, 'I am going to see that you have the nomination. We need men of your sort in Washington.' 'I don't know why you should have picked me out, Senator,' I said. 'I have no record.' 'You have a record here in Wolverton,' says he. 'I had not supposed a Wolverton record would count,' I confessed. 'A good record stands for the same, whether it is made in a little town or a great city. What the district wants is a man who is not afraid to be honest, who lives straight, keeps within his income, and minds his conscience. Besides, you have the right sort of a wife back of you.' Then I thought of that day last spring when he —"

"I 'll never forget it," I broke in. "You were a sight; he caught you whitewashing the hen-house. Then to think of your bringing him in to dinner when we were eating in the kitchen! All we had was frizzled beef with biscuits and gingerbread."

"It seemed to catch him; he said he had n't had such a meal since."

Weeks after, when Lem was off electioneering, the senator came again. He sat an hour on the porch with me and talked. There is something different — every woman knows I am speaking the truth — between silly compliments and words that warm the heart or fill the eyes with tears.

"You make me think in certain ways of my mother, Mrs. Shipe," said the senator. "I owe everything I am to her. For one thing, she had your brand of hospitality. You see I have n't forgotten that day you invited me to dinner, offering what you had, without one word of apology. There was a simple dignity about everything my mother did that we don't often find to-day. Still, she was a poor, plain woman. She and father came West on their honeymoon in a prairie schooner. The pioneer man hewed the timber and built the house, but it was the woman who made the home in the wilderness. The West has to thank women like my mother for its greatness to-day."

So long as I live I will never forget that talk with the senator. He made me see things in a new light. Somehow, up to that time I had not felt eager about going to Washington, or having Lemuel become a public man.

"Don't fancy, Mrs. Shipe," he said, "that you 've got to change in any way. Don't try to make yourself over to look like certain women you will find in Washington. Some of them are nothing great in the

way of models. I am counting on you, as much as I am on Lemuel, to help the State. We speak of our congressmen as representatives. I remember, at a dinner in Washington, a woman grumbled when I spoke of her husband as a representative. 'I like congressman far better,' she confessed; 'representative sounds backwoodsy.' 'My dear lady,' I said, 'think of what representative stands for. It means the one man we pick from two hundred thousand people, so brainy, so honest, so patriotic, and full of lofty ideals, that he is worthy to represent us in Congress!' I don't know whether she understood or not. We want you to represent the best women of the West, as your husband will represent our best men. I preach this homespun sort of doctrine all the time."

That night I lay awake for hours thinking over the senator's talk. I knew it was true as preaching, and I determined to help my husband as much as any woman could. Still, I would not, even if it were to take us into the White House, live over again the three months before that election.

It is not the outside world that gets the brunt of a man's moods. Lemuel is as good a man as the average; still like half the men in the world, he feels that home is the place to thresh out troubles and disappointments. One day he was away up in G; the next down below A flat. What hurt me was the way the papers took us up. Everything in our past life was raked over, even to my teaching for the first two years, and Lemuel's coming to live in mother's house. Shelby was fighting mad at having anybody of such

small account as Lemuel lined up against him. "If it had been Moberly or any man with a record," he confessed in an interview, "I could have swallowed it; but a five-hundred-dollars-a-year, pettifogging, little, crossroads lawyer — it 's like dueling with an inferior."

The lies they told and the stories they hatched went into every paper in the State. I always did, and always will, hate having my private affairs in print. They told about Jennie Weston, a girl Lemuel was once engaged to. She jilted him cruelly but they gave a different version of the story. The worst thing they said was that Lem's father died in the penitentiary during a sentence for murder. It was taken back the next week, and the paper apologized, confessing it was another Shipe family, who were neither kith nor kin to us, only some folks who read the big front-page story never saw the little item of a denial. In the end, though, it made votes for Lemuel instead of Shelby.

II

ELECTION DAY

THE morning of election day I had a big ironing to do so I went along with my work as usual. There was a larger basket of clothes than I generally had and never in my life had I been so thankful for work as I was that morning. If I had been a rich woman with nothing to do but fold my hands and sit waiting for news I should have gone mad. While the irons flew over faded little frocks and blouses I did a lot of thinking.

It was one of those warm, rainy days that come occasionally in November and the drip, drip, drip from the bare stalks of the woodbine sounded like a rhythm. I began to iron in time to it as one dances to music. That made me smile; it showed how absent-minded I was. I knew that down town, over in Cottonwood and all through the district, men were thronging to the polls. Lemuel's hopes went down below zero when he waked in the early morning and found it was raining.

"Why?" I asked.

"Rain brings a Democratic victory every time," he said.

"Do you mean to say that Republicans won't put

up an umbrella and turn out to vote on a rainy day?" I asked.

"That 's about the size of it."

"Then if I were you," I advised, "I would tie up with a party that had some backbone."

He was just going out at the side door. He laughed and came back to kiss me.

"Polly, girl," he begged, "wish me luck. If you had n't stood by me through the rainy days of life, my courage would have gone up the spout long ago."

"Nonsense," I cried. "Wolverton is full of folks who are no rainy-day friends of ours."

I watched him go down the path in the orchard. The drip from the apple trees pattered on his umbrella. As he shut the gate he lifted his hat and swung it round his head. I was shaking out the red tablecloth then, and I waved it at him. He nodded and turned away. It was so still, except for the rain, I could hear his quick steps along the narrow, plank sidewalk that led to town.

The children took lunch to school with them, so I had a long, quiet day ahead of me. As I worked I was longing and praying for Lemuel to win, yet I dreaded moving East with a terror I can never tell. Mother had always preached to us children that it was not money or birth or position that counted; it was what men and women made of their lives. Still I hated the thought of going into a great fashionable city and trying to fill a place for which I was never cut out.

Two nights before election I hinted to Lemuel that

it seemed foolish, if he won out, for us all to go East. "Don't you believe it would be best for the children and me to stay here for the first year, till we get a bit ahead? It would cost you so much less to live if you were alone. Then the journey means hundreds of dollars."

I can see now the startled way he looked up at me. "Polly," says he, "if you and the young ones don't go with me, I 'll pull out now. I can't face that sort of loneliness — two thousand miles from home."

If it had not rained folks would have been running in on me all day long, but we live two miles from town, and there is no nastier walking anywhere than the Gravel road on a wet day. Every horse in town was on the dead trot till six, taking men to the polls who could n't or would n't walk. So I was spared visitors. I was glad to have it so. Many a time work is better company than folks. When the children came home I had all the excitement one could want. Election had come between them and their studies all day, I guess. About five o'clock Lemuel sent Johnnie Wirt up with a note. "I don't know when I 'll get home," he wrote. "They have run a wire into a room at the Wolf's Head, and returns will come in here. You and the children eat supper alone. As soon as I have news, good or bad, I 'll be home as fast as a horse can carry me."

It had stopped raining. The air was chill as winter, and the stars were shining. I made a blaze in the fireplace; Lemuel loves a fire and I knew it would look good to him whether the district went Republican or

Democratic. The clock struck eight; still there was no news. I was nervous as a witch, but I saw I would have to shut down on my own feelings, for the children were as restless as myself. I gathered them around me, and, sitting there in the firelight, I began to tell them the story of Hans Andersen's "Little Mermaid." I had read it aloud so often I almost knew it by heart. I smile now when I remember where I stopped. The old grandmother had just caused eight large oysters to cling to the little mermaid's tail.

"They hurt," cried the mermaid.

"That is no matter," answered the grandmother. "One must always suffer for one's pride."

Then came the sound for which we had been listening. The gate that led through the orchard clicked. We ran to the door. Densie flung it open. A radiance from the firelight flooded the porch.

"Father!" cried the children eagerly.

"I 'm coming," he called. We heard him splash into a puddle near the gate. Then he laughed and I knew he had won. I felt for one moment as if my heart had stopped beating. It was the first step in the transition of our lives.

The children clutched at their father and hung about him. He did not stoop to caress one of them till he had taken me in his arms. "Polly, little woman," he whispered, "I am very happy. I licked Shelby by a big majority. The senator and the district helped like bricks, but you 're the winner. Folks trust me, they love you."

With the children still hanging to him he began to rush about the house, lighting a lamp in every room.

"Are you going to illuminate, Lem?" I asked.

"We must be ready to welcome folks. It is n't Wolverton alone that 's at my heels, half my constituents are on their way here."

The air with which he threw back his head and said "my constituents" was as funny as a boy in his pride over a victory.

"Lem," I cried, "I 'm not dressed for company, neither are the children. I 'm not fit to be seen in this faded pink gingham."

"Mother, you 're as sweet as a primrose in that faded pink gingham. Besides — Wolverton knows you best in your every-day clothes. You have n't a minute to dress. Listen, here they come!"

From away down the Gravel road came the music of a brass band; voices were shouting; I heard men and women laugh. Through the darkness we could see the glare of a hundred torches bobbing about. The crowd was right upon us, thronging through the orchard. Every qualm I had about the future went. We were not a new congressman and his wife. We were simply folks Wolverton had neighbored with all their lives. Then they came flocking in — men and women who, as little boys and girls, had been to school with Lemuel or me. There was the old minister who had married us, and his gentle lady wife; the doctor who had brought comfort into our home so many

times; Lawyer Marshall, lame as he was; Senator Trent; and a lot of county men I had never met before. Morehead, the little postmaster of Wolverton, who moved about his office like a pompous, pouter pigeon, unbent himself to make gracious speeches; even old Nancy, who had taken care of all my babies, came clear from Cottonwood to shake hands and wish us happiness.

I felt as proud as Lemuel did, only it was a trifle different. He was a politician who had come through a hard battle and won. I was a woman who had lived a quiet life, and knew very little about politics. Still, everything that was offered us, the loyalty, the trust and the love, made me very happy. I stood it bravely till the senator took my hand and led me to the bay window. Then folks began to look blurred to me through a mist of tears.

"Get on a chair, Mrs. Shipe; we want to see you," shouted somebody in the crowd.

The senator laughed, jumped on the window-seat and drew me up beside him.

"It is ladies first," he cried, in that booming, big voice of his. "Though Lemuel Shipe carried our district by a majority of eleven thousand votes, he is not the only pumpkin on the vine. This little woman, who stands at my side, is his right-hand man. Life is no walkover at our nation's capital, therefore he needs all the help and encouragement she can give him. I have known moments when a bunch of learned men were not such good advisers as one woman

— if she was the right sort of woman. Shall I tell you my idea of the right sort of woman?"

"Go ahead, Senator," cried a man beside me. "The women need a bit of touching up once in a while as much as we men do."

"Well," began the senator, "the right sort of woman has plain, common sense, high, honorable ideals, brain enough to make her companionable, innate refinement, rare gentleness, and, what we men lack, the brand of intuition that has been called feminine. Any woman possessing such gifts and knowing how to use them wisely has a clinch on rights that amounts to a good deal more than legislation can give her. Pauline Shipe has grown up among us; she has educated many of you; she has been a loyal friend and a kindly neighbor. More than one man in the district while casting his vote to-day for Lemuel Shipe, had in mind, as I did, that not only were we sending one of our best men to represent us in Congress, but with him goes a helpmate who stands for the best type of women we raise in our 'great woolly West.' Now, three cheers for our new congressman and Mrs. Shipe."

While I stood there I thought of many things; of how proud mother would have felt if she had been spared; of the hard days when we had almost to go without necessities of life; then I was wondering what the future held for us. Lemuel reached up and took my hand before the senator ceased talking. When I glanced down at him I remembered my lover and bridegroom, for his eyes were full of pride and gladness.

It was midnight before all was over and the children were in bed and asleep.

When Lemuel went to lock the door he called from the porch, "Mother, come out and see the stars."

He put his arm about me as we stood looking up at the clear sky. "I was thinking," he said, with a laugh, "what a different time the folks had after last election when they went out to Decker's. I called there with some men. They were keeping open house. Mrs. Decker wore a queer red dress she brought from Paris. A dozen women in fine togs stood shaking hands and smiling. An orchestra was playing, and the porch looked like a full blown midway with its Japanese lanterns. In the dining-room waiters were serving a supper and pouring champagne."

"I wish I had thought of it in time I could have baked a lot of stuff to-day as well as not," I said regretfully. "They did not get much here, though I guess the cider barrel is empty and we have n't a doughnut or a cookey left."

"It was n't the same sort of crowd that came here. I don't know what Mrs. Decker would have thought if George Eagle or old Betty Stiles had butted in at her jamboree."

"Mrs. Decker does not know anybody in that strata. She would tell you so, and yet — I believe I like our strata best."

"You 're a rank Democrat, Polly, in spite of where I stand to-day. Only," Lem's voice grew earnest, "every word the senator said about you to-night was

the truth. If God will help me and you 'll stand by me, I 'll walk straight, no matter how hard a job it is."

"I believe you will, Lem," I said solemnly.

III

GOOD-BY TO THE WEST

THERE was a year of respite before we went East. Into that year was crowded much work, much happiness, a few heart-burnings and a fresh insight to human nature. Lemuel and I, even the children, had become personages in Wolverton. I did not care for some things that happened. I hated the newspaper stories; they went so far out of their way when they wanted to be nice to us. Lem and I began to be invited by people who had never known we were alive till he was elected, although we had lived right among them. Their dinners and receptions were stupid affairs. Besides I had no gowns like some of the women in Wolverton and Cottonwood, for there is plenty of wealth and considerable style in our part of the country.

It was not easy to feel at home among people who were so different from folks we had been accustomed to. I used to beg Lem to go alone to some of the affairs, for it was him they wanted, not me.

"You must go, Polly," he would say. "We can't afford to set anybody against us. I need the good-will of every constituent I have. Besides it brings in business and at present every dollar counts."

Although he had put it off as long as he could, Lemuel had to get a dress suit. It cost more than three suits he ever owned in his life before; still it was a necessity. Other things began to crowd into the class of necessities, things we had once thought of as a fearful extravagance.

"Father," cried Densie, the night he first wore it, "you are a howling swell. You actually don't look like the same old Dad."

The child was speaking the truth. There was something different about Lem. With the expanse of white shirt front and fine black clothes, he wore something I had never seen before, a dignity in his homely, rugged face — a pride of being somebody, and of having achieved it by his own hard work. It made folks turn and look at him more than once that evening. I heard one woman say she had never thought before Mr. Shipe was what you would have called handsome. He is n't. You can't call Lemuel handsome and tell the truth; but he has a good face.

When the fourth of March came, it brought to Lemuel the realization that even away off in Wolverton he was a member of Congress. I could see him grow impatient for November to arrive and he put in every leisure hour he could snatch on study. It counted. Long afterwards an Eastern representative told me that Lem astonished his colleagues more than once by his thorough knowledge of parliamentary law.

"He got most of that knowledge during the year after his election," I explained. "Many a night I left

him deep in his books till I don't know how late, then he was up again at daylight and hard at work."

"It pays," said the Eastern man.

Some days in life are marked by a whiter stone than others. One of these was the morning when a franked envelope brought Lem his first check from the House of Representatives. I had anticipated in a vague way that an income of seventy-five hundred dollars a year seemed enormous. When Lem smoothed out the strip of paper and I read the figures; six hundred and twenty-five dollars, it looked like a fortune.

"For a month, Lemuel?" I asked with a half-dazed feeling. "Six hundred — and twenty-five a month?"

"Yes," his big laugh rang out; "are you just beginning to sense that we are rich folks?"

"Do you remember once — how we pulled through one whole year on three hundred and at the end did not owe a cent to anybody?"

"I do. It 's a horrible memory and I want to forget it. I hate poverty — hate it," he repeated emphatically. "Thank Heaven, the penury days are over. Except for Decker and a few of his plutocratic friends there are n't many seventy-five-hundred-dollar men in Wolverton."

"Yes,— only Lem, we 've got to remember this salary is not intended so much for living in Wolverton. Everybody, who knows about Washington, says it is the most expensive city in America — for everything."

"Still," maintained Lemuel while he folded the

check and put it in his pocket-book, "this is a pretty fair income for an expensive city. I 'll receive something like five thousand before we go East, and six hundred for mileage. I can clear up every debt, then the kids and you must be decently outfitted. Of course we 've got to keep something to start on in the East."

It would be hard to make you understand what the big checks meant to us in those days. We could not accustom ourselves immediately to such wealth, it seemed lordly — besides there was the feeling that no work was being given as an equivalent.

"Don't you worry about that, Polly," said Lem as I spoke of drawing a salary while he was not on the job. "They 'll sweat work out of me before the end of the long session."

Time wore on till it brought our last fall in Wolverton. Each day brought us nearer to good-bys we hated to say. Looking back upon it as I do now, I cannot imagine how I accomplished the work that was done. I could not do it to-day; it would seem to me almost beyond human energy. Lem would have spent money recklessly if I had not held him back. That summer we lived a little more comfortably but with no greater style than in the old days, because I guessed how much the going away would cost. There were trunks to be bought. So little traveling had come into our lives that one small old trunk was all the baggage we owned. I knew we could not show up in Washington in Wolverton clothes, and I did my very best with what Lemuel gave me. Densie was

sixteen, just old enough to long for all sorts of pretty things she saw in the magazines. I had Miss Pickering from Pipestem, who sews out by the day and she worked with me steady for five weeks. We made enough dresses for Densie and me to fill one trunk. By ripping and turning some of Lem's old clothes, we got suits that looked real well for Bob. It was not so easy to cover Jeff; he had just turned thirteen then, and was growing terribly.

One morning early in November I had a letter from Margaret, Lemuel's sister, who lives at Fruitlands, a big farm up in the hills. She had planned the greatest Thanksgiving ever known in the Shipe family. Relatives were coming from far and near. They felt proud of Lem, and wanted to say good-by to us. Margaret's husband was fixing rows of beds in the attic and stable loft. They had counted on having twenty-two children besides the grown folks. She wanted us all to come Tuesday night.

"We are planning a three days' Thanksgiving, Pauline," she wrote, "instead of one. We want to see you all before you go East."

I told the children when they came home from school. They were wild with delight. No place on earth except home, is like Aunt Margaret's to them. They perched on the posts at the gate, waiting for their father to come. He looked worried when he ran into the house, with the noisy crew at his heels. He did not have much to say about Margaret's letter till he followed me into the buttery where I was getting supper.

"Polly," he began soberly, "I don't believe you understand; but, dear, you know we can't stop here for Thanksgiving."

I was pouring a can of plums into the preserve dish when he spoke. I was so astonished I set it down half empty.

"Not stop here?" I repeated. "Why, Lem, where will we be?"

"East, I reckon."

"And we can't have Thanksgiving among our own folks? Can we never have another Thanksgiving West while you are a congressman?"

"Not when it comes at the end of November, as it does this year. You could follow along after me. Only, I ought to be in Washington the first of December. We have to look for a home and get settled before Congress convenes. It takes four days to go East. You had not reckoned on that, had you, Polly?"

He spoke gently. I could feel he was trying not to show his own disappointment, for Lemuel's kin are very close and friendly among themselves. I thought of Thanksgiving day among strangers, two thousand miles away from the folks we love. I tipped the can of plums again, and began slowly to pour them into the dish. I could not speak or look up at Lemuel.

"Let us keep a stiff upper lip, Polly dear, before the children. It is bad enough for the two of us, but I can't bear to see their disappointment. I thought you had calculated and understood."

"I did n't, Lem," I confessed. "I don't know why

I did n't. Of course I should have known, if I had given it a thought. Where will we be Thanksgiving day, do you suppose?"

"In as comfortable a place as we can afford, dear. It may not be a home, only we will be together, and that is worth being thankful for."

We did not tell the children till they gathered round their father, having a good-night talk. I sat beside while I darned stockings. They had the map of the United States before them. Lemuel was telling about the journey we were to take. They listened breathlessly while he led them over the Rockies, through the canyons of Colorado, across the Western plains, sandy deserts and wide prairies, through mining countries, great smoky cities, over the Mississippi and the Cumberland Mountains, down into the East with its slow rivers, its wide meadows, its orchards, its busy towns, and little villages, straight into the capital of the United States. I dropped my work and listened silently, as the children were doing. I began to understand what the East, with its culture and progressiveness, meant to Lemuel. It was the country that had seen the birth of a nation; there one was close to the heart of things.

I realized why our small living-room seemed to him like Wolverton; a place beloved, but cramped and hedged. Then I listened again. Lemuel was telling the children about Mount Vernon, picturing the city where Washington ruled, where Lincoln died, where Grant had come after the war. I began to long for the day to start East, although we gave up Thanks-

giving at Fruitlands regretfully; it was hard to leave while the Western country was preparing for the great feast-day of the year.

I have little recollection of how the last few days went by. I suppose we ate and slept. It seemed to me as if everybody I ever knew or heard of came to say good-by. Some of them were loaded with gifts, as if we were holding a donation party. There were such queer, useless, unheard-of gifts that the tears ran down my face with laughter when the donors had gone. And yet there was other tears, the tears of deep, tender gratitude for good-will and love and generosity made manifest to us during these few days of parting.

Then came the last hour. The children were bundled into Peter Dunn's sleigh, among buffalo rugs, for our Western country was buried in the first snow-storm of the winter. There was no room for Lemuel or me in the crowded vehicle.

"Densie," said Lem, while he tucked in the robes, "look after the children in the sleigh, also at the depot. Peter will come back for mother and me. There 's plenty of time. The train is not due for an hour and a half yet."

We climbed the steps of the porch between the big drifts and went back into the empty house, locking the door behind us. That last half hour was ours — alone. Lemuel hurried about, seeing that shutters were fastened securely, that fires were safely out. Then he lingered in front of the bookcase, lifting

out a few old, calf-bound volumes, which had grown shabby with the wear of years.

I wandered through the still house. I had been born in one of the little rooms under the low eaves. I was living over again the years that had come and gone. I had vivid recollections of a merry childhood and girlhood, then womanhood, with wifehood and motherhood crowded full of toil, also crowded full of happiness.

I was thinking how Lem and I had papered the walls together. Every inch of the rags that went into our homely, comfortable carpets had been stitched evenings, while I told the children good-night stories. There were pieces of clumsy furniture Lem had made in his little carpenter shed. Mother's elaborately quilted patchwork spreads were tucked neatly over each bed. Everything was shabby and worn; it was not artistic, except in a comfortable, homely way, and things did not harmonize. How could they? It was sixty years since father and mother had begun to settle the home.

Ours was a true home, sanctified by content and honest work; by lullabies that had been sung beside the old brick fireplace; and sweet child voices that had echoed through every room. It was filled to overflowing with memories I never want to forget. A little homely house preserves such memories; it seems to me they would fade away into nothing under the lofty ceilings of a great mansion.

I stood with my elbows on the top of a low book-

case, gazing at a picture in a tarnished frame, when Lem came in. It was a picture father gave to mother on their wedding day. He said she looked like the lady it portrayed. I had always smiled when mother told that, even when I was a little girl. Mother was all fire and activity, but with a certain gentleness that toned her energetic nature. She could never have sat long enough for that picture to be drawn, with a rose leaning against her cheek and a pensive, simpering smile on her lips. Still, it stood for much that had made the old home so happy — father's ideal of mother.

I was struggling with a sob that seemed to choke me, when Lemuel laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"Pauline, little wife," he said, "we must leave in a minute. I hear Peter's sleigh-bells. He is nearly at the gate."

IV

THE NEW WORLD OF THE EAST

OUR journey across the continent was wonderful. I looked down breathlessly into vast depths while we swept across trestles, like the threads of a spider flung from cliff to cliff. I felt the wonder of it everywhere, crossing wide rivers or rushing over brown prairies, crusted here and there with early snow. But, the cities — I hated the cities; most of all those terrible cities of the iron country where human beings were tearing at the bowels of the earth, or toiling naked behind white-hot furnaces.

"It is foolish to feel that way, Polly," said Lem, one night, while we sat watching the chimneys of Pittsburg fade into blurs, like red torches. "What you see is the backbone of our wealth and power. Great industries like these are what carry America to —"

"Don't, Lem," I cried; "don't talk of wealth and power all the time. I can not forget the millions in the mines under our feet or scorching at the doors of those blazing furnaces."

We were weary enough before the journey ended, but crossing the continent is a strange experience. As we got farther and farther from the West I felt that home, the home which seems to us the only

place in the world, was nothing but a pin prick on the map. No! it was not even that!

Our train was six hours late. When we got off in the great station Lemuel strode ahead with little Bob, whose curly head nestled into the hollow of his father's arm. Jeff took the place of the head of the house, carrying two heavy valises. It struck twelve as we entered the vast waiting-room, which was deserted except for a few drowsy travelers. When we stepped out on the street we faced a sharp wind, filled with whirling dust. Everything seemed to be in a strange state of upheaval, with a glare of electric lights beyond the chaos. Lemuel turned to a policeman who stood in the doorway.

"Where can we find a car?" he asked.

"Four blocks away," said the man stolidly. "Off in that direction."

"Don't cars run to the depot here?" asked Lem.

"Not yet. The tracks ain't all laid to the new station. Where are you going?" The officer looked us over with mild curiosity.

"I really don't know. To some sort of a hotel." There was a weary tone in Lem's voice.

"Well, find out before I come back."

The policeman dashed away to help a cabman whose horse was plunging in a heap of loose dirt.

Lem turned to me with a smile.

"Cheer up, mother; they don't seem to meet new congressmen at this end with a brass band. Don't you care. We'll break in presently to some place where there are beds and food."

The man in blue returned to his beat.

"What sort of place do you want?" he asked.

"You might direct us to some good hotel. Good," repeated Lem, "but not the very top notch in prices."

"And a cab?"

"Yes; do you suppose we can all tuck into one cab?"

"I reckon you can." The officer studied us dubiously for a moment. "You may find it a bit of a squeeze, only you have no great ways to go."

We drove to three hotels and did not find shelter. Then the cabman put his head in at the window. "They're all full up, sir. This is a bad time of the year to come to Washington if you hain't booked ahead. I don't know of but one more place you can try. It's the swellest hotel in town."

"Take us there," ordered Lem.

At last each child was in bed. While I leaned over them for good-night kisses I was choking back a wave of homesickness, which seemed for a moment to take the courage out of me. Those gorgeous rooms were such a contrast to the old home at Wolverton. I stood for a moment brushing my hair beside the window. City milkmen were already making their rounds. I could hear the rattling of cans and the pawing of horses' feet on the asphalt.

Lem came in from the other room while I was staring down into the darkness.

"Uncle Sam did not give us anything very hearty in the way of a welcome, did he, Polly?" he asked.

I shook my head and tried to laugh, but it could not have been much of a laugh.

"Cheer up, little woman," he said; "there are good times ahead."

After breakfast next morning we started to see the city. It was a glorious day. The sky was radiantly blue. The air was clear; and although it was winter in our Western country, among the trees in the park or on ivy-clad houses, there were still splotches of rich, dark green. In one yard we passed I saw roses and chrysanthemums in bloom, and the honeysuckle vines were as bright as they had been in June. Lem trudged on ahead of us, perfectly silent till Densie pulled at his coat.

"Dad," she cried, "are you trying to lose us?"

He looked down at her with a radiant smile. "Forgive me, child," he said. "I reckon I did forget my manners. I've waited for this so many years, I thought I was alone."

"You acted that way, you stupid old Dad." Then she linked her arm into his and took long strides to keep up with him.

None of the children had ever been in a great city before. I walked on slowly, trying to see everything, but the boys rambled here and there as they did in the woods at home. We turned a corner and found ourselves on a wide avenue. Lemuel stopped and laid his hand on Jeff's shoulder.

"Take off your cap, sonny," he said gravely. "There's the Capitol."

We stood quiet on the sidewalk for a few minutes,

with folks jostling us when they passed to cross the street. Then we moved on slowly, with our eyes fixed on a great building in the distance. It filled the end of the avenue with its massive white bulk, and the gray dome rose like the crown of a city against the radiant blue of the sky. The children understood, somehow, that their father did not feel like talking. When we reached the Capitol he took Bob's hand in his own and we followed up the vast flight of marble steps. At the top we paused. I believe Lemuel and I had the same thought in mind. It was mighty hard to realize that at last we were there.

While we wandered about the halls — it seemed to me that there were miles and miles of them — Wolverton faded farther and farther into the misty distance, till it was more than the breadth of a continent from us. There were throngs of people at the Capitol. Men went about quietly, but women were chattering and laughing and gadding in and out everywhere. Sometimes we met groups with a man ahead of them, who shouted information as though his mouth was a megaphone.

None of us did much talking. I believe even little Bob realized we were under a roof that is not like any other place in America. If Lem has spent time teaching the children one thing more than another, it is about our country and its history and laws. He strolled about holding their hands in his, telling them over again how, beneath this gray dome, the history of our country was made. Mother used to worry

about the way Jeff was being taught when he was a little chap — there never was a child so eager to know about everything as Jeff. Her complaint was that he knew more about the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution than he did about the Bible.

Lem stopped for a minute to speak to a colored man who was tipping back in his chair. Then he came and laid his hand on my arm.

"Come, Polly," he said, "let us have a look at a representative's room. This one may be mine for all I know."

He opened a door and we walked into a long, narrow room. There was a big desk in it, tall bookcases, a table and chairs. It looked bare, but Lem's face was glowing with happiness.

"I feel, Polly, as if I were standing on the threshold of a career," his voice grew low and earnest. "To get here I kept clear of graft, dishonesty, or bearing false witness against any man. I don't know that I 'm any stronger or better than other men, I reckon not; but I 'm going to try, Pauline, to keep on so I shan't ever be ashamed to tell you about anything."

I did not speak while Lem took my hand between his own. It was something like the contract Bob makes with me when we shake hands over a promise. Then I followed him to the window and he threw up the sash. We gazed out over one of the greatest views you can have of Washington.

Suddenly I thought of Wolverton and Lem's homely, dingy, little office over Burke's hardware

store. From its one window you look down upon faded awnings that creak when the wind shakes them. Pudgett's grocery across the street is the pleasantest thing in sight. His show of vegetables and fruit seems to brighten up the street. The plank sidewalks in Wolverton have been trodden so many years there is a wornout look about them, and the street is not often in good condition. It is apt to be deep with dust or snow or mud most of the time.

Here we saw a great city which shone in the November sunshine. The red and white and gray of it made me think of a vivid painting of Rome, I had seen in a gallery. Patches of grass under the bare trees were still bright green. The Monument towered above everything. It looked gray, with a thin line of silvery white up one side of it. Beyond was the Potomac, blue as steel in the sunshine, with misty hills fading into the distance.

Lem spoke as if he were thinking aloud. "The view here," he said, "beats old Wolverton to a standstill."

As we were leaving the room three or four people entered an office across the corridor. The women were elegantly dressed and handsome. You would have stopped to look after them anywhere. A man followed whose face seemed familiar to me, yet I felt sure I had never seen him in my life before.

Lem stood still, holding the door-knob in his hand.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"It is Crawford," he spoke slowly. "There is no stronger, better man in America than Crawford, to

my way of thinking. I wonder if you understand what it means for me, Polly, simply to feel that I am the colleague of a man like Crawford?"

I think I understood.

V

HUNTING FOR A HOME

THE children had gone out to spend the morning on the Mall and I was writing to Margaret, when my husband came in. As soon as I looked up in his face I knew there was something he wanted to talk about.

"What is it, Lem?" I asked.

He laid a slip of paper on the desk and sat down beside me.

"I knew, Polly, we would have to make a move, soon, from this place," he began, "only I wanted you all to rest for a few days. I thought we might stay here until after Thanksgiving. This morning when I was near the desk, I heard a man raging about his bill. He said it was highway robbery. I asked them to make out ours." He smoothed the sheet of paper and laid it beside me.

I looked at it but I did not say anything.

"It 's pretty steep, little woman, is n't it?"

"Lem — for two days! No, it is not two days yet! Why, I could have kept house for two months on this in Wolverton."

"I know it, Polly." He folded the paper and put it in his pocket. "I paid it but I believe we had better move to-morrow. Seventy-five hundred a year

looks like a big lot of money, only it won't go far at this rate. You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind, Lemuel!" I repeated. "I have n't spoken of it to you, because you never notice such things, only this is n't the place for us. We don't look like folks here. Last night when we came into the dining-room I saw women stop talking to stare at us. One of them lifted a pair of glasses, which hung on a chain, and gazed at us in the most deliberate fashion. If Densie and I had our best clothes here, they would look pretty ordinary beside these low-necked gowns that shine with jewels. Even the way we wear our hair is different. I saw them smile and say things to each other. Densie did n't notice. I was thankful she did n't. She 's just at the age when it would have hurt."

"We 'll get out of here as soon as we can, Polly, only clothes—" there was a contemptuous tone in Lemuel's voice. "There was n't a woman in that room who knows what you do, or a girl who can touch Densie for beauty."

I laughed. A woman loves to have her husband *think* such things, even when she knows he does not understand.

An hour later we started "home" hunting. What a name for it! Until you get within four walls and shut the door on the outside world, with no one under the roof except the few you love and live for, a home does not exist. I should like to think of a name for the other thing we had offered us, but I cannot.

We started with a long list of addresses. For hours we tramped about the city. All the time it seemed as if a home was fading farther and farther away. Neither Lem nor I had ever boarded in our lives. If we had, the places we looked at might not have seemed so forlorn. Time and again we rang the bell of a house which was so fine outside it seemed an insult to imagine it a boarding-place. The door was generally opened by a negro in a dress suit. He ushered us into a magnificent parlor with velvet hangings, large paintings, gilt chairs, and everything that helps to make a house unhomelike. Then we went upstairs, flight after flight, to see rooms that we turned from with sinking hearts.

When it began to grow dark there were still a score of places we had not looked at. As we left the last house I stopped at the foot of the steps and leaned against a railing. Suddenly the lamps about the square flamed out into disks of brilliant light.

"Are you tired, Polly?" asked Lem anxiously.

"I am just wondering," I confessed, "if my feet will carry me a block farther."

"There's a bench close by in the park; we might rest there," he suggested.

That bench, screened from the blaze of electric lights by a wide-spreading magnolia seemed like the haven of rest which poets write about. Cars went hurrying past, carrying thousands home from their day's work.

"We have a lot to be thankful for, Lem," I said suddenly.

"I know it, Polly," he acknowledged, "but what in particular?"

"I was thinking of men and women — there must be thousands of them in this city — who call such places as we have seen to-day — home. For us it is nothing but a stopping-place. The little house in the orchard is waiting for us."

"You're right," said Lem. "It's a mighty different proposition."

I shut my eyes for a few minutes, just to rest them. I could see the long, low, white cottage with its green shutters set far back from the Gravel road, and a stretch of trees in front of it. What if the branches were bare and the wind was sweeping about the chimneys. Indoors seemed to beckon, and a radiance of lamplight and firelight streamed through the windows. I longed for its quiet and homely comfort. It was far away, still it was a heavenly reality, more of a reality than Heaven itself just then.

In front of us loomed a vast apartment house where a hundred families could be housed. The side of it looked like one of those vast, gray canyons we crossed in Colorado. While I watched, the lights flashed out here and there. On a high floor there were six windows together, each one curtained in red. When the gas behind them was lit there came a glow as of lamplight and firelight inside. It was a home and there were homes all about us.

"Pauline," my thoughts were so far away that I started when Lemuel spoke, "had n't we better decide on some sort of a place, even if we only stay there for

a week or two? We will soon strike something better; something you can make homelike. You are such a genius along that line, little woman, you could make a dugout into a palace."

"Don't feel too sure of me, Lem." I had a horrid conviction for a moment that I was on the verge of a whimpering fit, just like Bob when his courage gives out.

"I *am* sure of you, dead sure, every time, Polly."

There have been moments in my life when Lemuel's unswerving faith was more than a moral bracer — sometimes it has been absolutely physical. I jumped to my feet.

"Let us go back," I said, "to that Capitol Hill place and take the three rooms there. They are not very clean and they are shabby; only, they are big, and the sun shines in. Besides the landlady was not the human limit, as in some places."

"Sixty dollars a week seems pretty steep for all they offered," said Lem. "Still I guess it is the best we can do."

The next day our boarding-house life began!

VI

A CAPITOL HILL THANKSGIVING

THE boarding-house on Capitol Hill, which was our first home in Washington, proved a brand-new experience. For a few days it seemed as if we had been tossed into a bag and were being gradually shaken into place among other squirming humans. I cannot understand why people should want to live in bunches. With some it was probably — as in our case — a matter of necessity. One old lady, who was seventy if she was a day, told me she had boarded for fifty years. I asked her if she had ever had a home. She looked perfectly astonished and slightly offended.

"I have found this house a very comfortable home for nine years," she answered stiffly.

It shows how differently some people feel about things. I would have gone into the woods and built myself a little one-room shack, making it as habitable as possible, if I had been told that the alternative was living in that house for nine years!

Our first morning there was exciting enough to fix it in my memory. We were eating breakfast, when a scream came from the kitchen. Lem was the only man left at the table, so the landlady sent for him. A few minutes later Rebecca brought a message asking us all to go upstairs. It was an hour before my husband

appeared. There was a half grave, half disgusted look upon his face when he entered, then he burst out laughing.

"What happened, Lem?" I asked.

"I have been aching to laugh for an hour, Pauline," he confessed. "And yet it was not exactly funny. You have not seen Posey, the old black cook? She weighs two hundred at least. She was at work in the pantry when she fell in a fit, and got jammed between the refrigerator and the flour barrel. It took four of us to pull her out. She broke several ribs and has been sent to the hospital in an ambulance."

"Is there anything I can do downstairs?" I asked.

Lem grew suddenly grave. "Nothing but keep out of that kitchen. If you go in there you will never eat another meal in this house — with an appetite at least. As for the landlady, she's the most idiotic proposition I ever ran across in my life. She ought to be arrested for trying to run a boarding-house."

"Why, Lem," I protested, "is n't that pretty severe judgment?"

"Not a bit too severe. I left her sitting in that awful kitchen, bewailing fate. There's nobody left to do the work except that giggling Rebecca and Silas. Miss Calvert told me, between her sobs, that she does not know where to look for another cook; still here she is with thirty people paying her money for board and lodging."

"It's an outrage."

"Women of her caliber," said Lem hotly, "obtain money under false pretenses. The law does not allow

an engineer to assume control of machinery till he has proved he can run it. Before she takes boarders a woman should be compelled to show herself competent to make a house decently clean and comfortable."

Lem went striding about the narrow room. "We 'll probably have to move again. I wanted to get to work; there 's a pile of mail now to be tended to."

He had just gone when a tap came to the door. It was Mrs. Van Vechten, the little old lady who had boarded for fifty years. Her face was stained with tears.

"I suppose you heard about Posey?" she said. Then she dropped limply into a chair.

"Yes; were you so fond of her?" I asked curiously.

"Who?"

"Why, Posey."

She jumped to her feet.

"Posey, Mrs. Shipe?" she cried. "Mercy, no! Don't you know Posey is a nigger — an old, fat, dirty nigger. It is not Posey I am thinking of. It is of ourselves and to-morrow's dinner. The house is at sixes and sevens. It will be worse to-morrow. I have invited my nephew and his wife from Baltimore. I hate to tell them not to come. I go there for Christmas, and this is the only way I can pay them back."

"Could n't you take them to a hotel?" I suggested.

The old lady flushed scarlet. "Mrs. Shipe," her voice trembled while she made her confession, "I have a small annuity — a very small annuity. I could

not take them to any place where it would be genteel for less than a dollar and a half a plate. Miss Calvert allows me to have them here, free, in consideration of the meals I miss during the year."

Suddenly Mrs. Van Vechten's troubles which had seemed ridiculous, began to appeal to me as real.

"It 's a wretched dilemma," she went on. "It distresses poor Miss Calvert beyond all measure. She is exceedingly anxious to throw her house open to congressional people. She thinks of you especially, and the impression you will get of her *menage*. I assure you she is a perfect lady. Being from the West, you do not understand the servant problem in Washington."

"Is it a problem?" I asked.

"My dear lady, it is the paramount issue. Still, I know the same situation extends all over the country. Probably you have it, with different complications, in the West."

"I have heard of it, but it never bothered me."

"Really, you are a most fortunate woman." Mrs. Van Vechten sighed. "Perhaps you had old family servants?"

"No, I never kept a servant in my life."

It makes me laugh now when I think of the startled expression on the old lady's face. She looked at me in absolute horror for one second.

"You told me you had never boarded before. Did you keep house?"

"Yes, I have kept house constantly since we were married. I have always done my own work. We

could not afford a servant. Don't you believe, Mrs. Van Vechten, in a woman's knowing how to do her own work and being proud to admit it?"

"Oh," gasped the little old lady, "yes, I suppose I believe in it. It is a worthy thing to do; I am sure of that. I should imagine, too, it is a great accomplishment. Only — I never knew how. I belonged to a very old and distinguished Knickerbocker family. We kept a retinue of servants. I never had to button my own shoes even."

"Do you button them now?" I asked.

She sighed. "Yes, I have buttoned them for some years. Only — I have never been obliged to cook — or sweep — or wash dishes."

She left me, closing the door softly behind her. Then I heard her steal upstairs to her tiny back room on the top floor.

I sat for half an hour darning stockings and thinking, for Mrs. Van Vechten had given me something to think about, when another visitor entered. It was our landlady, the tall, genteel, careworn Miss Calvert. She had a bandage wrapped about her head, and she looked positively haggard. The Posey episode, so she told me, had tied her nerves into a wisp and given her an excruciating headache. She had come to beg a great favor of me.

"Would you be kind enough, just for once," she asked, "to care for your own rooms? It is hard to spare Rebecca from the kitchen. Ill as I am, I am going now in search of an old chef whom I can engage

for to-night. To-morrow I do not know where to turn. Every cook in the city will be engaged."

"If you feel better," I suggested, "can you not get the dinner yourself with the servants' help?"

"I — I — cook a dinner?" she said slowly.

For one moment I had a withered-up, blown-away sort of feeling. So long as I lived in Washington I never again asked a woman if she could cook. It seemed to be as deadly an insult as if I had inquired whether any near relative of hers had been hanged, or served time in the penitentiary.

Miss Calvert explained to me haughtily that she was an F. F. V. Then she told me what the magic letters stood for. I had never heard them before. If the woman had not looked so wan and worn I would have told her some of the things Lemuel said. I had not the heart to do it.

There was a glorious moon that night, so Lem and I went for a walk. After listening to the story of his day's work, I said, "I want to tell you before we go indoors what I have planned for to-morrow."

"Fire ahead. To-night's dinner was not half bad. Only, Pauline, I hope you may never see that kitchen."

"I have seen it. It 's awful. To-morrow I am going down there to run things."

Lem stopped and stared at me. "You, Polly? For mercy's sake! What would you do in that filthy basement? If the domestic machinery should break down to-morrow, as I expect, we will dine at a hotel."

"Listen," I pleaded, "it is not the idiotic landlady

I am helping. The house is full of people who for weeks have been looking forward to Thanksgiving. There are ten or twelve young folks who can't go home, stenographers and clerks in the departments. They had planned a big affair for to-morrow night. They clubbed together to get music and flowers and they were to have had a dance."

"Why does n't the woman herself get the dinner?"

"Lem, she does not know how to cook. She was insulted because I imagined she could."

"And yet running a boarding-house. Why! it is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of, to think of you toiling all day in that dirty kitchen for a bunch of hungry strangers."

"Nonsense, Lem, it is my own idea; it will be fun."

"Fun!" he repeated. "It is scarcely my idea of fun!"

When we reached home the young people were in the parlor playing cards. Nannie Phipps, the only girl I had become acquainted with, sat in a corner reading. I had liked her the first time I saw her, she was such a fine, hearty, wholesome girl. She laid down her book and came to greet me cordially.

"Miss Phipps," I said, "won't you introduce me to all the young people in the house? Miss Calvert, you know, is sick in bed. She has deputed me to get dinner to-morrow. I want to call for volunteers to help."

The girl threw her arms about me in the impulsive way that Densie does when she is childishly happy. "What!" she cried, "is the dinner really going through? I know you can do it to the Queen's taste.

You are just like mother. I thought last night, if I could have sent for mother — she is such a cook! Only, she is a thousand miles away."

"Will you help?" I asked.

"Help! Every blessed one of us, boys and all, will help. Why, it will be no end of fun. You could never have guessed at our disappointment when we came home to-night and heard that everything was off. Why, Mrs. Shipe, we have been planning this Thanksgiving frolic for weeks and weeks. Then — to think of Posey throwing a fit!"

Nannie Phipps was a trump. Two other girls in the house were as capable and sensible as she was. Even Lem helped. He went down to the kitchen and talked to the servants. They stayed up half the night scrubbing and cleaning.

"What on earth did you do to them?" I asked.

"I read the Riot Act. They needed it."

After the breakfast dishes were washed we took possession of the kitchen. There was plenty of food in the big refrigerator. Densie and I divided the work into shifts, with the rest as aides. Nannie Phipps made pie that I could not have excelled, and everybody pitched in as if it had been a lark instead of labor.

Once in a while my thoughts flew back to Sister Margaret. I could follow every step she was taking that morning about the big spotless kitchen at Fruitlands. I did not have a homesick feeling, still I was longing for Margaret. How she would have enjoyed the funny things that happened, the ridiculous darkies,

and all the excitement of our unexpected cooking *fest!* Besides, she would have gone enthusiastic over the dinner. I do not believe there was a better dinner served in Washington that night.

When Silas brought in the coffee somebody started speech-making. They gave me a toast, also an armful of flowers, and I began to have that "Queen of the May feeling" which Margaret says a woman can stand at very rare intervals in her life.

After it was over I felt tired and said "good-night" while they were still dancing and singing. Densie, the dear child, looked as sweet as a pink. I unpacked her best white frock, tied knots of yellow ribbon in her hair, and she was as happy as a girl ought to be at sixteen. Lemuel acted like a big boy. I laughed till my sides ached while I watched him lead off in the barn dance.

When I left the parlor Mrs. Van Vechten ran out and stopped me on the landing to whisper what I suppose she meant as an apology.

"My dear," she said, while she gripped my hand, "I wish to tell you the sentiment of every one in this house to-night. You do not know how truly we appreciated your kindness, your very great kindness and labor, on our behalf. It was a remarkably fine dinner. You are a rare woman. We all want to know you better; and —" her voice sank to a whisper —"you may rely on me, my dear Mrs. Shipe, never to repeat to a soul in the house the secret you reposed in me."

"What secret?" I asked perplexedly.

"About, my dear — about your never having kept

a servant. Believe me," she nodded her head solemnly, "it is a confidence that will never cross my lips."

"Thank you," I said gravely.

As I watched her trip back to the parlor, patting the ridiculous, gray puffs that made her head look like a monstrosity, I clung to the banister, convulsed with laughing.

Poor, simple, silly, little old lady!

VII

THE DRAWING OF SEATS

ON the December morning the House convened we were up bright and early. Lemuel decided that the children ought to go, so we put off the first day at school till later. I hesitated when he suggested it. I had not forgotten one afternoon at the circus, when the management of two boys was no small task.

"They must go," insisted Lem. "It's a scene that even little Bob will remember all his life."

Before nine o'clock we had taken our place in a line which was gathering fast. The mob grew more dense every minute. It was a quiet, orderly mob, although every man in it had made up his mind to get the best place there. Lem stayed by us with Bob perched on his shoulder. Jeff and Densie were able to hold their own; still when the doors opened the crush was terrible. Lemuel succeeded in getting us into front seats. I had dreaded the wait of three hours, for a small boy often seems possessed by the demon of restlessness, but there was enough going on to keep them interested.

I had had some vague idea of the House in session. It was gathered, I suppose, from pictures of an imposing assemblage, with the speaker in the chair, and rows of desks where men sat in solemn deliberation.

I know that scene now by heart, but it was different the first morning I visited the House. The crowd in the galleries grew so dense it seemed remarkable nobody plunged over. Every pew was wedged full of people. Then they began to sit on the steps or line up behind the last row of seats. When the House was called to order men stood on chairs in the doorways trying to peer over a hillside of heads. Women and children were everywhere, many of them the wives and families of congressmen.

People were friendly enough, which made the long wait easier. Suddenly it dawned on Bob that he was hungry, and as I sat in terrified expectation of a whimpering fit, a sweet-faced old lady touched me on the shoulder. "I have lunch with me. I don't believe I 'll want it; divide it up among the children."

There were sandwiches, cookies and apples in the box, and I was thankful enough, for it staved off trouble.

Before the opening of the House, many of the representatives came strolling in. Some of them, like Lemuel, were new men and utter strangers to the scene. My memory went back like a flash to the first day of school in the little red schoolhouse at the crossroads, when new children flocked in, shy and awkward, sometimes even fearful of school life. These new representatives acted like schoolboys. They felt a thousand eyes fixed on them, and were realizing keenly that they did n't know the ropes. Lem was ill at ease — I could see that. He came in early and took a seat where he could look up at us,

nodding and smiling as the boys waved excitedly to him. He sat there quiet and lonely, reading a paper or glancing over a bunch of letters he pulled from his pocket.

I caught sight of Senator Trent, leaning on a rail at the back of the House. He was searching the place with his eyes. Suddenly he caught sight of my husband, then he walked down the aisle until he stood behind him. Lem did not see him till the senator's hand was upon his shoulder. He jumped to his feet, his face beaming with gratitude and pleasure. He pointed to where we sat and the senator took his hat off to us. Then he led Lemuel away to a group of men who stood near the speaker's chair. I knew a few of them by sight; their faces had been appearing for years in newspapers and magazines. Among them was Crawford. That day we first visited the House, Lem pointed him out to me as his ideal. When the senator introduced Lem the men who were leaders greeted him cordially. In a few minutes he was at ease with them, just like a schoolboy when the first strangeness wears off.

Before the clock struck twelve the floor was crowded; men were renewing old friendships or making new acquaintances, sometimes wandering off with their arms wound about each other. When the speaker took his seat the floor was deserted, and the men crowded outside the rail to await the drawing of seats. Before the ceremony began a few old men took their places.

"These representatives are accorded the courtesy

of the House," explained a man who sat beside us. "That old gentleman who wears a red carnation in his buttonhole is the Father of the House; another is the oldest in point of years among the minority; the man going down the aisle belonged to the Forty-third Congress; if an ex-speaker were alive he would be among those allowed to choose a seat before the drawing takes place."

The children hung over the balcony watching every movement. A little page was blindfolded and led up to the platform, where the clerk stood with a box in his hand. He shook it vigorously.

"There 's marbles in it," whispered Bob excitedly.

"You 're right, little chap," said the man beside us, with a smile. "That 's just what the box holds — three hundred and ninety-one new, white marbles. Each one has a number painted on it."

The page reached his hand through a hole in the box, drew out a marble, and handed it to the clerk who stood beside him with a paper in his hand. He glanced over it and called out a name in a loud voice. That man appeared immediately and selected a seat. Lemuel's name was one of the first called; he came forward briskly, glanced about him for a moment, then chose an aisle seat in the center of the House. The drawing of seats went ahead steadily; each man who was summoned seemed to have in mind the space he preferred and slipped into it quickly. The choice grew limited after three hundred marbles had been drawn and the body of the House was comfortably filled. A handful of men, who stood outside the rail

waiting for their call, glanced uneasily at stray vacancies in back rows or on the very selvage of the House. One of the men who waited was Crawford.

"It 's hard on Crawford," whispered my neighbor. "He had the pick of seats last session, and has always had a place in the center of the House. He really belongs there; you see, he 's a leader. All that 's left now are the scrubbiest desks in the Cherokee strip."

"What 's the Cherokee strip?" I asked.

"Those few seats on the side," he answered, pointing at the line that I had thought of as a selvage.

Crawford was left standing alone when the page took the last marble from the box. The clerk glanced at it, then called the name of the famous representative. There was a buzz of voices which sounded like a murmur of sympathy. The tall man with the fine, thoughtful face and silvered hair walked down the aisle. As he passed the row where my husband sat, he stopped. Lemuel had risen, put out his hand, and was speaking to him. Crawford shook his head as if in expostulation, pointing to the remoteness of the Cherokee strip. Lem gathered up the papers and letters strewn upon his desk, stepped out into the aisle, and proffered his seat to Crawford, who shook hands cordially and sat down. Every eye was turned upon my husband while he made his way past the speaker's chair to a lonely corner beneath the gallery.

"That was fine," said the man beside me. "I guess that must be one of the new representatives who gave up his seat to Crawford; I never saw him before, I wonder who he is."

"It was my husband, Lemuel Shipe," I said.

"Good for him! Still, it ought not to have been left to him to do it. There are a score of men here whom Crawford has made. Any one of them ought to have jumped to his feet before a stranger did. But you mark my words, Crawford is n't the sort of man to forget a courtesy."

VIII

THE BLUE GOWN

DINNERS, receptions and other affairs that people call "entertaining" are an old story to me to-day, but when I recall that first winter in Washington, I realize more acutely than I did at the time what an ordeal it was. Many a night I went to bed with a sore heart. I could not speak of it to Lemuel. He would not have understood. Men do not treat each other as women do. A man seldom sizes up his fellow by a shabby coat or an unfashionable hat. The majority of women do.

The first season I suffered a good deal because my clothes were made by Miss Pickering of Pipestem. I had one blue gown, about which there is a story. Lemuel, like thousands of men, would as lief go through fire as enter a dry-goods store. One day after election he brought me a gown he had picked out himself. My heart sank as I opened the bundle. It was a piece of splendid silk, but I had never seen anything so blue — it was such a vivid, startling blue that for a second I turned my eyes away from it. Then I looked at Lem. He stood beside me, smiling. The smile changed to a sheepish grin when he confessed he had gone shopping and bought the stuff himself.

"The clerk assured me it was the most fashionable

color they had," he confessed. "I told her I wanted something pretty blue. I've always remembered that blue frock you wore the night I brought you home from a party at Cottonwood — the night we got engaged, you remember."

I stood staring at it with a blur of tears in my eyes. I was thinking of many things — of that evening when Lem asked me to be his wife, and of the courage he had summoned to go shopping, then — I was fairly longing to strangle the clerk who palmed off that unsaleable piece of silk on him. Weeks passed before I let Miss Pickering make it up. She confessed it was an outlandish color and ought to be sent to an African savage. Time and again I tried to nerve myself to tell Lem that it made me look like mud, then, as I was about to ask him to change it, he would hold the silk against my face and say I looked as pink and as white as when we went to school together.

So — Miss Pickering made it up, swathing the neck with black lace, in a vain attempt to tone it down. Nothing could tone down that sort of blue.

The first time I wore it was at a dinner the Vice-President gave to new representatives from the West. Usually, after I get through with the process of dressing I never give clothes a thought. I went to that dinner oppressed by the blue gown. Lemuel had grown accustomed to a dress suit, and we were meeting men he saw every day of his life, so he was perfectly at his ease. I could think of nothing but that awful blue. Our hostess was a gracious lady, but I saw her start with surprise when I was presented to

her. She was over it in a second and welcomed me cordially, but while she spoke I realized how differently we looked. Her gown was of pink, draped with a filmy stuff a shade pinker than the satin beneath it. There were touches of black on it. A pink cameo pinned a band of black velvet about her throat. She was an older woman than I was, and she was not handsome — though she had a pleasant face — but she was perfectly at her ease. She knew she was well dressed.

I realized — better than I had done when standing before the mirror at home — that my first attempt at "glad rags," as Jeff calls them, was a tragic failure. Every one in the room knew it — my hostess best of all, in spite of her kindness. She kept me beside her, introducing me to every guest that came. When a tall man offered me his arm I felt thankful because he peered down at me shortsightedly through thick glasses. He probably knew I wore something blue, but he did not realize that my gown was queer.

I sat eating and drinking in silence. The woman on the other side of us was a quick, brilliant creature, who seemed to know as much about politics as the men did. My partner forgot me while they discussed some bill that had just come before the House. I listened, realizing I had much to learn besides how to dress. The dinner interested me. Wonderfully garnished dishes came and went in rapid succession. Sometimes I had not the faintest idea of what I was eating, for the food was strangely seasoned.

I had almost forgotten how queerly I looked, and

was enjoying the fragrant sweet peas heaped in a silver bowl in the center of the table, when the man at my right spoke to me. I had scarcely glanced at him before. The rest of the dinner seemed to pass quickly. He knew our Western state, he had ridden over our mountains, sailed our rivers, he admired and appreciated our people, he had grown to love our country. We were still talking of the great wild West when the hostess rose, and I followed her with a group of other women to the parlor where coffee was served.

There was one rude woman in the group, a little creature with an insignificant face. She wore a ridiculous gown. I would not have exchanged even my lurid blue for the fripperies that swished about her. I could not hear her voice but I knew instinctively when she asked the woman beside her who I was. She repeated my name, with the amused smile I have often seen when people hear "Shipe" for the first time. Then she lifted a jeweled lorgnette and stared at me for a minute with cold scrutiny. I sat and faced the prying silence while her neighbor talked with some one else. It was the first time I had been examined through a lorgnette by a person with perfectly normal eyesight. I have undergone the same torture since, but that callous survey stands out in my memory as the most unnecessarily cruel incident I ever experienced. It did not occur to Lemuel to ask if I had enjoyed myself. He took it for granted. I wore that blue gown three times — then I laid it aside forever.

IX

THE LENOX STREET HOUSE

AFTER a few weeks the Capitol Hill house became unendurable. Probably it was no worse than the average boarding-house, only it would have taken years to harden us to bad management, dirt, domestic upheavals, the idiotic landlady and the strange human junk which drifted in and out beneath its roof. The children had never lived in any home except Aunt Margaret's and our own and the atmosphere of the place began to tell on them. Unconsciously Densie and Jeff were picking up absurd ragtime songs and cheap phrases which pass as wit while Bob, flattered and fussed over by all the boarders, began to lose his sweet, childish ways.

One Saturday night an entertainment was given in the parlor. Bob, tricked out in a silk hat and cane, was put through a vaudeville turn. Some of the young folks had trained him as a surprise to us. While he strutted about giving a ridiculous encore, I realized suddenly that we *must* get away and make a home for ourselves, somewhere — alone. That night I spoke about it to Lemuel.

"I 'm sorry, Polly, for I don't know what we can plan. I see as well as you do that it is hurting the

children and I know you hate the life here. Still I have no time to look around, I can't catch up with my work as it is. If you should find anything better, I say 'Go ahead' to any arrangement that suits you."

I spent ten days searching for a home, escorted all over the city by real-estate men, who extolled with sumptuous adjectives everything we looked at, no matter how glaring its faults were. There was not a homelike place among them. Hundreds of men and women make a business in Washington of renting furnished houses to congressional families at absurdly high rates. After a year or two the official crowd learn a lesson and rent their home for the next session when there is a long list to choose from. Our search during January seemed to be hopeless. I had almost decided on looking for a better boarding-house when Lemuel came home jubilant over a find.

"It 's a big house in the Northwest," he explained, "on a fashionable street. There are ten rooms beautifully furnished, so Ward & Alden tell me."

"It does n't matter so much about the fashionable street. One has to live up to their neighbors. What 's the rent?"

"It 's only $125 a month."

"Only — $125 a month!"

"It 's cheap for a house in that neighborhood — on the Heights."

"It 's more than we can afford, Lem, besides I can't do the work alone in a big house like that."

"Certainly not. I had never dreamed of you doing the work. We 've got to have help. Everybody of

any account in Washington keeps two servants at least, generally a man and a woman. I want to begin to be somebody. It does n't pay to be stuck away in this rat-trap among a shoddy crowd."

Lem rose and tramped about the room in his impetuous fashion. I know my husband like a book. He always had a keen ambition for show and power, even in Wolverton, where there was no chance to cut any kind of swath. Then he has never had my keen distaste for debt. He would not dream of eating or wearing anything he could not eventually pay for. The future holds for him eternal visions of wealth and supremacy, therefore the present is left to care for itself.

"I have arranged to go and see the Lenox-street house to-night, Polly. I want you to go with me. Dear, I am thinking of you and the children as much as of myself, you ought to be taking the place you are fitted for in Washington. Now don't get to worrying about finances. If things go my way we won't always have to live on seventy-five hundred a year."

"How?" I asked.

"Never mind, little woman." He laughed complacently. "You know yourself you have no head for business."

While we stood on the steps of the Lenox Street house after ringing the bell, I knew that Lemuel's decision was made. Through a dimly lit hall, we caught a glimpse of a large dining-room where red candles glimmered in a silver candelabra. There

were Oriental rugs on the floor, velvet portières at the doors and a wealth of pictures on the walls.

"I 'm going to have this house, no matter what the rent is," whispered Lem, as a colored girl came through the hall to open the door.

A few minutes later, the woman who owned the house came rustling down the stairs — no, she did not rustle — she was not that sort of woman. She stole in with a quiet, furtive tread. The moment I laid eyes on her, I felt a strange distrust. She was suave, and polished, she had a certain faded stateliness like her dimly lit house with its vague attempt at elegance. She was not an unattractive woman, she might have charmed other men as she did Lemuel — for a brief time. A soft voice, an appealing smile and delicately veiled compliments can play hob with the most level-headed man until he catches a glimpse of the cunning behind them.

She made her business arrangements with a wistful deference to our needs and an utter disregard of her own plans. In a way I can not express she made me feel when we took possession of her house that we were accepting a sacrifice which could not be rated in money value.

She clasped her fragile hands together and told us the story of her life. She was the daughter of a Southern general. Ill fortune had come and nothing was left, but their home.

"It seems a sacrilege to turn it over to strangers, only —" she smiled sadly, "it might have been so different. Fate could have sent me people who would

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not have loved and respected my poor household idols as you will. I have had the choice of a score of tenants, but none of them were gentlefolk."

Then we followed Mrs. Speck about the house. I was eager to turn over beds, count blankets, glance into pot closets and linen presses but I could not bring myself to do it. She made me feel it would be desecration; our money was sufficient to pay for a lodging-place but not for a home hallowed by a lifetime of happy memories.

In a little den we came unexpectedly upon Mr. Speck. It was a shock to me; I had fancied her a widow simply because she did not mention a husband. She introduced us in the most casual way. His glance was an appeal, I knew he dreaded being turned from his home. In his old age he had been thrust into a corner like broken, discarded chairs we saw in the cellar. Once upon a time he might have had a manly air but ill-fortune and years of retirement into the background had effaced him to a colorless nonentity.

I sat in the parlor listening while Mrs. Speck and Lemuel talked business. She met every demand with smiling deference although she made her bargain as skilfully as the shrewdest business man would have done. When I offered any suggestion she evaded it with a gentle condescension which put me where I belonged — as an outsider.

We were saying good-by in the hall when she turned timidly to Lemuel as if a thought had suddenly struck her.

"Would you mind, Mr. Shipe," and a piteous appeal lay in her eyes, "if I were to take a few personal belongings with me? They are things you would scarcely miss; my daughter's desk, pictures of our old home, relics that belong to my father and little things we gathered abroad."

"Certainly not," said Lem cordially; "take anything you wish."

"You are *so* good, how can I be sufficiently grateful." She took my hand and held it with a gentle pressure. "You have made me very happy. We waited months for the right people to come. Often I have refused the house reluctantly, because we need money — terribly — but I could not profane it forever. We have enough old furniture to make a little flat habitable and I thank you — so much for allowing me to give it some homelike touches. I hope you will be very happy here."

"Poor lady!" said Lemuel when the door closed upon us.

I listened while he talked enthusiastically about the new, lovely home and the charming neighbors Mrs. Speck had described. It was a place where we could entertain, it would give us the chance to make some influential friends.

"Are n't you happy over it, Polly?" he said. It had suddenly occurred to him that I was not joining in his rapturous outlook on the future.

"I would like to see the house by daylight."

"Why, you can see it to-morrow, I guess."

"But, is n't it all settled?"

"Practically. I meet Mrs. Speck to-morrow at her lawyer's to sign the lease."

"I wish you had not arranged it so hurriedly."

"Why, I thought you were as eager to get away from Capitol Hill as I am. Besides these real-estate men are born cheats. It is very different dealing with a lady like Mrs. Speck."

"Lemuel,— she is not a lady, she is a — vulture."

My husband stood stock-still for a minute. We had reached a street corner and the glow from an electric light fell on his stern, shocked face.

"Polly, you 're grossly unfair to your own sex. I have seen that trait in you often. Mrs. Speck is a gentlewoman, she 's a thoroughbred."

"She 's a thoroughbred humbug," I said hotly. "You 'll find I 'm right before you get through with her."

We walked on and I listened to him extol the woman, her fine breeding, her fortitude in the face of ill-luck, her gentle, sweet manners and the artistic beauty of her house. I begged him at last to say no more about her. He grew moody. I think he was turning over my opinion of her in his mind but next morning before I could pay another visit to the Lenox Street house he had gone to her lawyer's and signed the lease.

A cold, which hung over me for several days ended in a sharp illness. When we moved I drove to the Lenox Street house in a cab and went straight to bed. Lemuel had arranged to take Mrs. Speck's colored maid off her hands, so Densie and she ran the house

until I was able to be up. I could feel all sorts of hitches occurring that were hid from me. One night the thermometer fell to a little above zero and the house grew cold as a tomb. Lemuel admitted the furnace was old and broken down and seemed equal to heating only a few rooms. I could see he was worrying about other things which he kept to himself.

When I was able to be up and around, I discovered that the suspicions I had of our landlady were mild. The house was stripped of every-day necessities. She had exchanged comfortable beds for bumpy divans, and Oriental rugs had been replaced by strips of ragged carpet. Still I was utterly at a loss to tell how she had cheated us because the swindle had been done so skilfully. Silver candelabras and tottering cabinets filled with absurd bric-a-brac were left in place while linen closets held nothing but the merest rags. We had a cup, saucer and plate apiece, the stock of silver was as tarnished as it was scant, and every saucepan in the kitchen was burned or leaking.

I should really have preferred a carpet sweeper which would sweep to a "Winged Victory" in the hall, and a coffee pot with a lid on it to an African war drum. Curtains and portières were moth-eaten and our only pictures were an array of uninteresting family portraits. Before a month passed I had grown so weary of the smug-faced Specks that I lifted fourteen of them from the walls and stored them in a dark cupboard under the stair.

Our supply of bedclothes was pitifully inadequate

to cold weather so I had to purchase blankets and the old broken-down kitchen stove was a glutton on coal. I had wondered at the strange medley of furniture, which seemed like the remnants of forty sets. When I began to inspect it, I found on the back of bureaus or under table legs, ancient labels which told of an auction-room origin. I should not have objected so much to the lack of harmony in furniture — our little house at Wolverton held odd pieces, only they were plain and strong — but the ridiculous junk at Lenox Street had a habit of falling apart when it was looked at.

I did not rub misfortune into Lemuel. He stood up manfully for Mrs. Speck even after he had entered a complaint to her lawyer about the destitution of necessities and the decrepitude of furniture. Our protests went unheeded. We discovered that a clause in the lease protected her, because our complaints ought to have been made within twenty-four hours after entering the house. When we came in contact with her, she was still bland and gracious but even Lem saw what I discovered the first night we met her, a nature hard as nails under the suavity, and such a mercenary streak as you seldom find in a woman. She was worse than mercenary,— she was unscrupulous.

It was useless to do anything but live out the seven months' lease, making the best of it. Occasionally I demanded things which were stern necessities. She sent me polite notes explaining that the ridiculously small rent she asked for her charming home would allow of no extra expenditure and as for what she had

taken away, we had given a cheerful permission to remove anything she wished.

I missed a bed-quilt one day and discovered that during my absence, Mrs. Speck had called and carried it away. Daphne, obeying a tip from her old mistress, had 'phoned when the coast was clear and she made quiet raids on the house more than once.

As I look back upon that first year of housekeeping in Washington, I can smile over some of the absurd things that happened. But worries were real then and the threads of gray in my hair widened into a silvery band. Daphne was followed by one untrustworthy negro after another. They lied or stole or scamped their work with such smiling complacency that I grew to hate the race. I had to work harder with help than I did in Wolverton, when I was alone. We were cheated constantly in such petty ways, that I began to cultivate an attitude of steady self-defense.

The seventy-five hundred dollars which had seemed like a fortune in Wolverton began to prove merely equal to our needs.

Behind everything loomed the shadow of Mrs. Speck. After a few months she threw aside her mask for she realized we had taken her measure. She made things uncomfortable and expensive for us many a time. Still our case was nothing in comparison to the lot of the poor, white-haired, broken, old husband who came every week to pay us a doddering visit. I let him wander about the house — there was no need to trail him as I would have done her — he was wretchedly homesick. My heart had ached for him

from the first moment I saw him in the dreary little den, huddled in a shabby dressing-gown beside a chilled radiator. In some vague way he brought back to my memory a story of Bulwer Lytton's I read when I was a girl; the story of a homeless, hunted dog crouching in the angle of a wall.

Before we left the Lenox Street house, Lemuel confessed that occasionally a woman's intuition comes strangely near the truth.

"What did you see in Mrs. Speck, Pauline, that I did n't?" he asked humbly.

"I can't tell you. I think behind eyes that smiled at us the vulture was revealed."

"I don't understand," mused Lem, "why we should keep women off the bench, if they can arrive instantly at a verdict which a man has to labor on for days."

At times Lemuel is touchingly simple and frank.

"You 're pretty good, Polly," he said humbly, "not to rub it in."

"You need mercy from me. Mrs. Speck will rub it in before you get through with her."

She did. The day our lease expired she came with a lawyer and a real-estate man to go over the house. She compiled a startling bill for damages done to the decrepit old furniture, and she discovered that all sorts of things were missing. Whether she took them away herself during occasional raids or Daphne stole them, we never knew. On the medley of articles listed as hurt or missing she set fabulous values. I remember she made an affidavit that a lost stove-poker

cost one dollar. We fought the fraudulent claim for months, then she threatened to bring it into the courts. Finally Lem gave in and sent her a check. A congressman could not afford to be mixed up in a dirty transaction like that. She knew it.

As Jeff would have put it in his schoolboy slang, "she lammed us one between the eyes," at the moment of parting.

We stood in the hall having a last word with her lawyer when the daughter came sweeping in. I had never seen her before; she had just come home, after playing small parts in some Western stock company. She had her mother's face, though the cruelty and sordid lines were hidden more deeply under rosy curves and long eyelashes. She stared at Lemuel and me for a moment with cool, disdainful impertinence then she turned inquiringly to her mother.

"Mama," she asked gravely, "where are we to stay to-night? We can not occupy our own beds, can we — after these — people?"

"No, darling," answered Mrs. Speck with her honeyed smile, "certainly not. I have sent for the health department to fumigate the house — thoroughly."

X

BREAKING INTO SOCIETY

WE were scarcely settled in the Lenox Street house when I could see an ambition to be somebody beginning to tug at Lemuel. Sometimes I can read my husband's mind as if it were the open pages of a book. He is so unsuspicious that it almost seems like eavesdropping. I watched him day after day preparing to suggest that we live up to his ideal of a congressman's establishment.

The new house had one luxury, which did in part compensate for its tatterdemalion condition. It was an open fireplace in the big upstairs room which we used as a library. Wood costs so much in Washington that I felt as if I were burning a bank-note when I laid a log across the andirons, but on dreary nights I always blazed up the fire which stood waiting for a match. Lemuel loves the glow of crackling wood as a boy does a bonfire. I have seen a gleam of firelight on the walls banish his weariness as soon as he opened the door and met its welcome.

I waited till nearly twelve one night, when there had been a late session at the House. Long sheets of rain came threshing against the window and swept the street while the wind tore at the branches of the young trees on the sidewalk. When Lem came in he was wet

to the skin. He slipped into a dressing-gown and slippers, and as he pulled his chair up before the blaze his face wore a smile of placid content. Mere physical comfort means more to a man than a woman,—of course I except the idle, luxurious creature who snuggles between down pillows with a novel and a box of candy.

He glanced at the little clock on the mantel when it struck twelve. "I suppose you ought to be in bed, Polly," he suggested. "You've probably had a hard day."

"Nothing exceptionally hard." I smiled when I thought of Lem's idea of a hard day. A man would set aside as fiction the schedule of a housewife's working hours with three children to care for and a stupid, insolent negro who could not possibly be classified under the head of help. Lemuel imagines that housekeeping wheels turn like the second hand on a clock.

"You're your old self again, Polly dear?" he asked as he lit a cigar.

"I never felt better."

He sat up suddenly as if a thought had just occurred to him.

"You have n't made your calls yet?"

"No." I realized that question had been lying at the back of Lem's mind till a convenient moment arrived.

"You have n't had a caller, have you, except those old guys from the boarding-house and the colonel's wife?"

"No."

"Pauline, we'll never get anywhere at this rate. A man can't break into society; it's the woman's job."

"Lem, don't ask me to commit that sort of burglary," I begged.

"Nonsense, that isn't the way to look at it. You don't really have to break in. Every door in Washington stands wide open for a congressman's wife. Only she has to start her career by making calls."

"I've been too busy to think of them. Where have I got to call?"

Lemuel rose and crossed the room to his desk. He pulled out two books and laid them on the table in the most casual way, although I knew they had been there for days, awaiting a chance to take up the calling question.

"This is the congressional directory. It gives the addresses of the official set and here's a book on Washington etiquette. It tells you how to go ahead."

"How to break in?"

"Why, yes, if you look at it that way."

I glanced over page after page of addresses.

"There aren't many bachelors or widowers in the House?"

"Not enough to lighten your job to any great extent, I reckon. You've got to call on four or five hundred women before spring."

"Four or five hundred," I repeated in dismay. "I wish we were back in Wolverton. We would never have dreamed of a stranger coming to us for a welcome."

"Pauline, you don't expect the Lady of the White House to make the first call, do you?"

"No, not exactly, but —"

"I've been talking with Kauser. The Kausers have been here five terms and know the ropes. They go everywhere now, but he confesses when they came East they were as green as early corn. I heard a man say yesterday that there was n't a better entertainer in Washington than Mrs. Kauser. Study up that etiquette book; it tells you how."

"What to wear, how to act and what to talk about?"

"Nonsense! All that's required of you is to follow a regulation program, begin with the White House, then the Vice-President's and the speaker's home. Follow up with the supreme court, cabinet and senatorial set. When you come to the congressional crowd it does look formidable. I swear I would n't want the job."

"Lemuel, I don't see how I'm going to do it on one pair of feet."

"Great Scott, I don't expect you to do it on your feet. Get a carriage and go in style as other women do."

"And dismiss Daphne to pay for carriage hire?"

"Certainly not."

"Lem," I said gravely, "we are making our income fly now. It means scrimping in Wolverton. Scrimping comes hard after you have splurged."

Lemuel's forehead wrinkled fretfully.

"Go ahead and do your end of the job. I'll take care of the finances. I'm not going to live in Wash-

ington cooped up in a corner. I tell you the man can't do the butting-in — alone. It 's the wife's job. If she can make folks like her, the ice is broken. I never knew exactly how you did it, Pauline, but you had a sort of little adoration circle among Wolverton women. I see no reason why you can't do the same thing here."

I sighed hopelessly. "Lemuel, it 's so different here! It strikes me as the worst sort of hypocrisy to set about *trying* to make people like you. I grew up in Wolverton. Folks there are pretty much like ourselves. The thought of whether they liked me or not never came into my head. I was simply — well, I was myself."

"That 's it," he cried eagerly. "That 's what Senator Trent 's forever preaching; be yourself."

"It 's easy enough to preach. Try it with some painted, jeweled lady examining you through a lorgnette as if you were a new bug she was trying to classify."

"Don't be a coward, Pauline. You know yourself you 're head and shoulders above the lorgnette lady. She does n't count. As you get acquainted, women will return your calls. We 'll have dinner invitations, you 'll be asked to teas and all sorts of affairs, you can show up once in a while as patroness at some charity show. Then we can give a dinner or two ourselves."

"We give dinners, Lem — like the Vice-President's?"

"Well, not exactly on that scale, but I doubt if anybody could beat you as a cook. I heard men talking

yesterday about a dinner at Barker's of Kentucky. They say nobody misses a Barker dinner, except by sheer necessity. She 's a rarely fine cook herself and her Southern dishes are famous."

"You can make friends here then, simply for what you give them to eat?"

"A good dinner appeals."

"Lem, have you ever noticed the dishes Mrs. Speck bequeathed to us? They 're like the furniture — discards. We have three gauzy things she listed as tablecloths, two changes of napkins, and as for silver — Besides — Daphne can't wait on a table."

"I had never dreamed of putting Daphne on exhibition. She 's scarcely presentable enough for ourselves. There are places where you can hire everything from a waiter to finger-bowls and somebody to cook the dinner."

"Lemuel, have you any idea of what such a dinner would cost?"

"Confound it, Pauline, I 'm not eternally counting the cost as you are. What if it does cost, we 'll get it all back. Only, I tell you, I can't make the first move, *you 've* got to start things."

XI

FIRST CALLS

YESTERDAY I heard Jeff explain how he "put a chum of his wise" on something.

I wish somebody had "put me wise" on how to start our social career in Washington. I made all sorts of mistakes; the first was when I got mixed up with our next door neighbor. She was the wife of a retired colonel, an old man, who walked with a cane and seemed tired of life. Probably he was seventy. She may have been thirty years younger, but she dressed as youthfully as if she were eighteen.

They had no children, and her life was one round of social "duties." She seemed to have a host of friends. During my convalescence, I sat by the window on her "at home" day. Our street was lined with carriages — finely gowned women came and went at her house all the afternoon. I did not like her entirely, still she was a novelty,— her gossip about well-known people amused me, for I was just beginning to sit up the day she came and I had grown tired of being alone. She was bright, talkative and good-looking in a showy sort of fashion.

She was my first caller. If you have ever been a stranger in a strange city, more than a thousand miles from home, you know what that means. I once

heard a Dakota woman tell about entertaining a book agent who stopped at their place while crossing the plains. She bought her books and made her stay a week. The stranger was not particularly likeable, only — their dugout was twenty miles from a neighbor and occasionally for a month at a time there was not a woman to speak to. Our dugout had a brownstone front and was wedged into a row of other brown-stone fronts which looked so exactly like one another that I never dared come up our own steps without searching for the number.

When I told the colonel's wife I was planning to make my calls, she suggested we go together. It was not the calls I dreaded so much as the thought of invading strange houses alone. So I said "yes" at once.

"Suppose we have an electric," she said. "I know of a natty little turnout we can get. It does not cost much more than a herdic and it gets around quicker; besides you can't tell it from a private machine."

When the runabout called for us she came sweeping down the steps in a gown so magnificent that my plain suit suddenly seemed to look dowdy. She had attended to the appointments of our carriage. Inside the door hung a vase of roses and a small clock ticked on the shelf in front of us. She handed the driver a list of the calls we were to make and laid a stack of cards on the shelf.

"Are you sure you have cards enough?" she asked.

I opened my card case.

"Mercy, these are nothing. You need a hundred at least and ever so many more of Mr. Shipe's."

"You surely don't buy cards by the hundreds?" she remarked when I stepped into the carriage with another package. "It's cheaper to get them by the thousand."

She began to post me on the superficial observances of social life in Washington. It grew irksome. I am always glad to accept necessary and kindly advice but I resented her air of condescension. Besides she was making me realize in a score of ways that I needed an infinite amount of touching-up on manners, on clothes, on everything.

Our first call was made at a splendid mansion. The crowd in the hall was as dense as a jam at a bargain counter, although the gowns were different from those you see in a department store mob. Here and there I saw a plain street suit like my own, but they were few. It was almost impossible to keep from stepping on long trains and more than once I heard something go "zip."

A footman stood by the door announcing names. When he called in his stentorian voice, "Mrs. Lemuel Shipe," a score of women turned their heads with an amused smile. It seemed to me that never before had my name sounded so uncouth.

I passed before the line of elegantly dressed women so quickly that before I had drawn one long breath, I was being swept out with a crowd to the dining-room. There I stood in a corner sipping a cup of tea and nibbling at a bit of sugared pastry, which left greasy spots

on my fresh gloves. The lady who sat pouring tea asked with an absent-minded smile if I would have cream or lemon. I told her cream. A moment later with the same studied smile she handed me a cup of steaming beverage in which floated a slice of lemon. I am old-fashioned enough to abominate tea with lemon in it.

Nobody spoke to me. The colonel's wife disappeared before we reached our hostess and I seemed to be the only stranger in the dining-room. Standing there silent I listened to the queerest confidences floating out tangibly from the babble about me. The table was a delight to the eye with its cover of filmy lace, its gleam of silver and gold dishes, the sparkle of glass and the crisp loveliness of pink roses heaped as lavishly into a crystal bowl, as if they had been gathered from a June garden.

I stayed there till the colonel's wife came searching for me. She was in a peevish mood. The papers had advertised that a titled Englishwoman was to be seen in the receiving line. Her spirits had gone down to zero when she discovered Lady Hartzell had sent regrets, besides a lace flounce had been torn from her new gown.

"Mercy, you must n't loaf around like this everywhere we go," she said sharply as I followed her to the runabout. "We 've been in that house for half an hour. It was not worth two minutes with nobody receiving but those absurd old tabbies. There are still fifteen calls on our list."

The funny side of it began to appeal to me. Women

rushed about as frantically as if their efforts were earning them a living. The colonel's wife dropped me coolly at each doorstep. When I was set free from her critical gaze I made a try at acting as the crowd did. I donned the regulation smile and greeted women I had never seen in my life before as if they were old friends. Most of them responded graciously and I twittered away as if I had lived all my life in an atmosphere of small talk. It was nothing however but a trial gabfest. I felt ashamed of it and never did it again.

Years ago Lemuel and I spent a day at a big exposition. The memory of it is like a gray blur to me now except for one thing, the few breathless minutes when we went shooting through a scenic cavern. I saw trees, waterfalls, mountains and bridges as if I had slid past them in a dream. That swift journey came flashing back to my gaze as I drove home after my first calling day. I could scarcely remember one face among the hundreds of women I greeted. There were faces weary with smiling, lovely, inanimate faces, cold, haughty faces, uninteresting faces, and a few kind, pleasant faces I longed to see again.

The colonel's wife went gushing from one hostess to another. She carried herself with an assured air as if certain she was making an impression. It seemed to me that every woman in Washington was out calling that afternoon. I had lost all memory of the faces of hostesses, but I felt as if I were cultivating a bowing acquaintance with the groups we met on door

mats or in parlors. Hundreds seemed to be following the same beaten route as ourselves.

I glanced nervously once at a big clock we passed in a hall. It was nearly seven. Wednesday was Daphne's day out and I had left Densie to care for the dinner. I knew she would do her best, still when boys came in hungry and cold from play there was apt to be an uproarious half hour.

"I ought to go home," I said to the colonel's wife.

"Mercy, not yet, there are two more calls to make. Nobody in our set dines till eight and people call till seven."

She turned to me from a group about the punch bowl at the last place where we stopped.

"I guess I 'll say good night, Mrs. Shipe," she said carelessly, while she held out three white-gloved fingers. "My friend, Mrs. Dent, has offered to take me home in her machine. I 'm sure, I 'm very grateful to you."

During the ride home alone I wondered why she was grateful. The little clock on the carriage shelf pointed to a quarter past seven, my card case was empty, my gloves were stained and grimy, the red roses in the hanging vase dropped their heads limply, and I was tired,— tired to death.

When I stepped out I handed five dollars to the driver. The colonel's wife had explained that the machine cost ten dollars for the afternoon.

The man looked at the bill by the light of his lamp.

"It 's twelve you 're owing me, Lady," he ex-

plained. "You've been out an hour longer than was bargained for."

"But — the colonel's wife — didn't she — pay her share?"

"No — you're Mrs. Shipe, ain't you? The limousine was ordered in your name; she said you were to settle for it."

It was all the money I had in my purse. I ran into the house and explained it to Lem. He went out to pay the man.

"What shall I do about it?" I asked when he came in.

"Nothing, so far as I can see," he answered grimly. "Evidently there are welchers among women as well as among men!"

XII

"JOLTS"

AFTER several "jolts" a man begins to realize that the position of M.C. in Washington is about as different from the place he occupies at home as the two letters are from Member of Congress. If his district is part of a great city he may not be of so much consequence among his people but off in a little Western home, where they think of Washington as we do of the Eternal City, he is IT.

His election lifts him above the position he has always occupied and he is kow-towed to whether he likes it or not. The average man likes it. Lemuel did. To be perfectly honest, so did I like a certain brand of the kow-towing. I loved the hearty good-will, the appreciation of old friends, their belief in Lem and a pride in us which they did not try to hide. That sort of kow-towing, however, brings with it a responsibility which has to be lived up to.

When we came to Washington and Lemuel dropped to the level of M.C. which is the dignity given a representative on his franked envelope, we found ourselves among the little group at the foot of the three hundred and ninety-one. Every day we were made to realize how insignificant we were and any self-esteem we had possessed began to work out of our systems.

Lemuel felt keenly the empty months before he began to have a say about anything.

"Pauline," he confessed one night when he came home tired and discouraged, "it sounds egotistic but sometimes I fairly ache for a hearty handshake from one admiring constituent."

I believe my first really severe "jolt" came from a laundry man.

I was reading a letter from Walt, Margaret's biggest boy, one morning.

"By Jinks, Auntie," he wrote, "I envy you off there among big bugs, where you can cut ice."

Then the doorbell rang.

Lemuel's collars and cuffs had been wearing to a frazzle so I had tried a new laundry. When the colored driver handed me a bill I realized that there was not a penny in the house. The man refused to leave the bundle, though there was only forty-seven cents owing on it.

"It 's ag'in the rules," he said decisively. "I don' know a thing about you, you 're new folks. You may skin out b'fore I come back."

I laughed. "There is no danger," I said, "of us skinning out before the session ends. My husband is Congressman Shipe of —"

He interrupted me contemptuously. "Congressmen don' count here — the woods is full of them. 'Sides, they don' pay their bills no better'n other folks that ain't got no H.O.N. in front of their names. Good mornin', I 'll bring the things next Tuesday and you have your forty-seven cents ready."

He turned away and went down the stair whistling.

At first I was furious, then it struck me as ridiculously funny. It certainly was not "cutting ice" to be refused credit for forty-seven cents!

Another morning I was at the top of a step-ladder, overhauling Daphne's untidy pantry, when a ring came. Daphne was on the third floor and did not hear it, so I hurried to the door.

I had pulled down my sleeves but forgot to take off my gingham apron. A young woman stood on the steps. She was tall, handsome and elegantly dressed. Long, blue willow plumes swept over her hair from a wide-brimmed hat. She stepped past me in a brisk, business-like way and waited in the hall.

"Is this where Congressman —— lives?" she asked while she fumbled through the leaves of a notebook.

"This is Mr. Shipe's home."

"Yes, of course,— Shipe. Is Mrs. Shipe at home?"

I told her with an extinguished sort of feeling that I was Mrs. Shipe.

"Oh," she exclaimed. I don't think she believed me at first, then her disdainful glance said plainly, "You will have to excuse me for mistaking you for a servant."

I led her into the parlor, even if I did think she was an agent and asked if there was anything I could do for her.

She looked me over haughtily, then she explained.

"I have been deputed by Vawter to ask you to

come to their gallery and have some photographs made."

"Why?"

"Because they keep on file portraits of all the congressional ladies. Papers and magazines call for them constantly."

"I do not imagine you will have a call for mine."

"Probably not." She shrugged her shoulders.

"How much do you charge?"

"Why, nothing! We consider it an accommodation to have you give us a sitting."

"I will talk with my husband about it."

"Then you can not plan for an appointment now?"

"No, I would rather not."

I had ushered her to the door and bidden her good morning when she turned suddenly. "What did you say your name was?"

"Mrs. Shipe," I answered.

She whisked over the pages of the notebook, drew her pencil through a name and ran down the steps. I shut the door and went back to the untidy pantry. While I washed off dusty shelves and set jars of groceries into decent order, I laughed aloud. It was perfectly absurd to have dreamed even for a second that I had attained distinction enough to have my portrait in a paper! I was simply one of three hundred and ninety-one women and such an insignificant fraction that the name of Shipe would not stay in an agent's memory.

XIII

THE POSTMASTERSHIP

BEFORE we came to Washington I had the vaguest possible idea of what a congressman's job meant. I knew that two hundred thousand people looked to him to protect their interests, but I had not realized the insignificant tasks they often demand.

One evening a young Southern congressman dropped in to see Lemuel. He said he was tired and did n't want to talk shop.

"Been working hard?" asked my husband.

"It may not sound like hard work but I 've spent three days trying to have a constituent paid for a mule which was stolen during the Civil War."

Lemuel burst into a roar of laughter and clapped the Southern man on the shoulder.

"Funny, is n't it?"

"It does not look funny to me." Young Ordway reddened. "I feel tempted to dig down into my pocket and square the claim myself. Father lost his home and all he possessed in war time but he — he put it in his pipe and smoked it. The idea of an old knock-kneed mule, it 's picayune!"

"It is picayune," assented Lem soberly. "You 're where I was when I arrived. You 're hot to do big things. I learned however that even a picayune job

well done sometimes puts one solid with a bunch of constituents and it 's a boost nearer the top."

"I suppose so," said the Southerner glumly.

Even the women in country districts turn to a congressman's wife with ridiculous requests. I received a letter once from a woman at Sachem Falls asking me to buy her "some real swell sausage puffs." She enclosed two dollars and a switch of her hair. The sausage puffs cost five dollars. Lemuel handed me three dollars and bade me send them. Her husband was a young farmer who had worked hard in our behalf. The trouble was she told about it and half the women in Sachem Falls asked me to shop for them in Washington.

When I opened an envelope one morning a pawn-ticket dropped out. It came from a woman in Panola. She wrote:

Dear Mrs. Congressman Shipe:

My husband, Thomas R. Jones, voted lection nite for Mr. Shipe and got so rorrin drunk that he stayed that way a weke and pawned the cloths of his back also my weding ring its up to him to get back his cloths but I hope your kind husband will see its his duty to get my gold ring out of pawn we lost our sertifikate and the rings all I 've got to prove we were marryed.

Yours Truly,

ELLEN JONES.

Lemuel found she was telling the truth and had the ring restored to her. Little affairs of that sort perplexed me. I mean the right and the wrong of them.

If Lem had not been in Congress, he would never have thought of redeeming that ring,— the woman would not have begged him to do it. In a certain way it seemed to me like buying votes. If I had been asked to set down such items in a charity or graft column, I would have hesitated for some time as to where the money for the "sausage puffs" and the wedding ring ought to have gone.

Lemuel asked me one morning if I could economize for a month or two. "I 've got to send eight hundred dollars home for campaign assessments," he explained.

"I wish there was more conscience in politics," I said. "It seems so —" I hesitated. He turned to look at me in utter surprise.

"More conscience — in politics — what do you mean?"

"I don't believe that sort of thing is right."

"You would n't want me set down as a tight wad?"

"Lem, please don't misunderstand me. I wish a congressman could be elected simply because the people want him and think he 's the best man in the district."

Lemuel spoke in a slightly offended tone. "You almost suggest — Polly — that they did n't want me — that I bought my election."

"I did n't mean that — what I hate is patronage."

"My dear, the highest-minded man in the House could n't hold his job ten minutes if it were n't for patronage."

"I know — you don't pay — actual money — for your election —"

"I pay actual money — I told you the other day that in one way or another the next election will take two thousand dollars out of my salary. No man can run for office, even the most picayune office, without spending more or less money."

I did understand and I hate to think of it.

Probably the nearest split Lemuel and I ever had on politics was when he put a new man into the Wolverton postoffice. I picked up the *Gazette* one morning and read in big headlines on the front page.

EDITOR DEERING MADE POSTMASTER

ENDORSED BY REPRESENTATIVE SHIPE

TO SUCCEED JOHN MOREHEAD

William Deering is a good, honest man and for many years has been a friend of ours, but as I read of the appointment my heart fairly ached for John Morehead. He had been postmaster in Wolverton for years. He is a pompous little man, still he would tramp across half the country to do anything for a friend. I loved his wife. She had been a neighbor of ours since long before we were married. They have a son who is terribly crippled and has never been able to support himself. Their daughter died and left three little grandchildren to be cared for by the old folks. Caroline Morehead's life has been a hard

one and I knew they could not have saved money.

Somehow that night I dreaded Lemuel's home-coming. He had never said a word about changing the postmaster, though he was always eager to tell of affairs in Wolverton. The loss of income would mean a great deal to John Morehead; then he was so proud of being postmaster and he had done his smallest duties so well. I could remember exactly how he looked as he threw up the shutter in the little window after the mail had been distributed. He stood there himself handing out letters with a dignity that would have befitted the postmaster-general.

It was not easy to broach the subject to Lemuel. I knew he would say I did not understand. Generally he did not ask for the *Gazette,* but that night he went searching for it. When he could not find it he asked carelessly:

"Did n't the *Gazette* come to-day, Polly?"

I handed it to him and he sat down by the window to read.

"I don't know where my copy went," he explained. "It never showed up to-day. Did you see we 're going to have a new postmaster in Wolverton?"

He asked the question without raising his eyes.

"Yes."

"Don't you think Deering will make a tiptop postmaster?" he persisted.

I looked Lemuel straight in the face. Then I asked, "Why did you turn Morehead out?"

"Why?" he repeated, "simply because the postmastership is the biggest appointment a congressman

has and he generally gives it to the man who did the best work for him."

"I 've heard you say Morehead was a splendid postmaster."

"He 's grown too old — too wedded to his job to do much hustling."

"Is n't a postmaster supposed to be wedded to his job? When the Government pays him a salary does n't it expect faithful work?"

"For heaven's sake, Pauline," Lem grew impatient, "quit asking fool questions and look at the situation with common sense. If you don't want to discuss it, I 'll read my paper;" then he picked the *Gazette* from the floor.

"I simply want to know, Lem, why you should have given the postoffice to Deering?"

"Yon don't imagine," he spoke slowly and with emphatic pauses, "that I would give the Wolverton postoffice — to Job Martin or Eph Finch — or any of Decker's low-down coyotes — that worked against me. Do you?"

"Of course not; I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Well, what are you driving at?"

"I can't understand why John Morehead should be put out of the postoffice so it can be given to somebody else. Deering owns the *Gazette* and makes a good living out of the paper. He does n't need the postoffice. The Moreheads do."

"Polly," Lemuel put on his impressive manner, "can't you see the difference? Deering worked for me through the campaign, horse, foot and dragoon.

Don't you remember how splendidly he stood up for us through those wretched lies that Decker concocted. Why, his editorials alone turned over a few hundred votes to me."

"Yes, I remember, and we were awfully grateful. I stopped at the *Gazette* office myself one morning purposely to thank him."

Lemuel bent forward, laughed and took my hands between his own.

"Pauline, you're a dear, simple, honest little woman, but do you suppose Deering worked for us out of pure friendship?"

"Why?" I paused perplexedly. "Of course. I thought it was simply from friendship and because he wanted to see the best man win. Then of course he is a good Republican."

Suddenly a doubt flashed into my mind. "Oh, Lem, you didn't promise Deering the postoffice — then — before you were elected?"

He dropped my hand and sat erect in his chair. He did not have to answer for he flushed to the roots of his hair, even his ears were burning red.

"Why shouldn't I have promised it to him?" he asked stiffly.

"I don't know," I confessed. "I simply don't think it was perfectly straight."

"It was straight as a string."

I smiled doubtfully. That simile always strikes me as so perfectly absurd. Nothing in the world is so scant of backbone as a string; it waggles every which way.

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Lemuel rose and pushed his chair aside,— it went tumbling against the radiator. He picked it up and spent a minute smoothing the rug beneath it.

"Pauline, you don't know the first thing about politics. Women can't understand. Their minds are n't constructed that way. They see things from a standpoint which is biased and wholly personal."

He stood pulling on his overcoat and turned his face away. He looked so hurt he was almost sullen.

"I 'll never discuss it again, Lem. I guess you 're right, I don't understand. There 's just one other question though I want to ask. May I?"

"Go ahead," he answered coldly.

"Are you going to find any other position for John Morehead?"

Lemuel wheeled suddenly around and looked me square in the face.

"No; I 've disposed of everything else. Morehead can look around for a new job for himself. He 's no protégé of mine. Decker put him in. I don't know why I should look out for Decker's man."

"I was n't thinking of Decker, Lem. It was Morehead himself I had in mind. He 's an old man and they 've had no end of trouble. I don't believe he has saved much of anything."

"Well, that 's not my funeral," answered Lem stubbornly.

"You don't remember — I suppose, Lemuel," I began, "when Jeff was a baby and the Moreheads lived across the Gravel road from us. One night when you were lying ill with pneumonia, mother and I were alone

and all of a sudden Jeff was taken with one of the awful attacks of croup he used to have. I was scared stiff. I waded through the snow for Mrs. Morehead. She was a nurse, you remember, in her younger days. She came over — it was long past midnight. She made a croup tent, as she called it, and started some sort of vapor under the baby's crib. Do you remember?"

"It seems to me I do recollect something of the kind."

"It was snowing and blowing. I never saw a worse storm but John Morehead dressed and tramped down to the village. At two in the morning he came back with the doctor. You were pretty badly off yourself that night, Lem. The doctor worked over you for an hour. He said Jeff would have died long before he could have reached us if it had n't been for the little croup tent. Don't you remember?"

Lemuel stood staring out at the window. He nodded, then he began to draw on his gloves.

"So," I pleaded, "are n't there other things in the world as well as politics — honor and decency and gratitude and reciprocity? You know, Lem, you 're always preaching reciprocity to me."

"Yes," he laughed uncomfortably, "but it 's different. I was trying to make you understand the tariff."

"This is the same brand of reciprocity that a nation believes in."

Lemuel kissed me before he went out. Instantly I felt happier.

I never mentioned the postmastership at Wolverton again but weeks later Lem tossed a letter into my lap. It was a grateful note from Morehead, thanking him for his influence in getting him a good job.

"I suppose I 'm up against the proposition next, Pauline, of putting you on a salary." Then he laughed.

"For what?" I asked.

"For acting as a congressman's conscience."

XIV

UNCLE SI MARKS

IT was weeks after the calling episode before I saw the colonel's wife to speak to. One morning she leaned out at her bay-window which looked into our sitting-room and asked, "How do you do?" I was not particularly cordial; still, she ran downstairs and came in for a little visit. It did not seem to occur to her that she was owing me either an apology or explanation. While she was there I had to go into the kitchen to see the iceman. I found her reading the Wolverton *Gazette* when I came back.

"This is the most extraordinary publication I ever saw in my life," she said. "I suppose it's what is called a country weekly. Listen: 'Mr. Ebenezer Todd went to Vittoria yesterday to buy his winter's supply of hen feed. Eb is making good money off his chicken ranch.' 'Miss Luella Pickering of Pipestem was dressmaking in town last week. She sewed for Mrs. Al Brown and also at the Karl Swartz house; now for a glimpse at the latest styles.' And isn't this funny—'The Hemstitching Club met Saturday at Mrs. Ed. Waddell's. Fifteen members were present; they worked on winter underwear for the children of the Higgs Refuge, while Mrs. Jake Thresher read "Sordello."'"

She laid down the paper and laughed till the tears came. "Don't tell me they have discovered 'Sordello' in Wolverton."

I was silent. She glanced up at me when she stopped laughing. Suddenly it occurred to the woman that she had been tactless.

"Forgive me," she cried, "really I could not help it. I don't believe you know how funny it is."

"You were not raised in a little town?" I asked.

"Mercy, no! I was born and brought up in New York City. This is so quaint and 'early villager.' Do you know any of these people?"

"They are old friends and neighbors of ours. Luella Pickering is my dressmaker. We think of her as one of the family."

"Really! How interesting!"

"Don't you read the social column of the *Post* every morning?" I asked.

"Certainly," said the colonel's wife. "It's the only thing I read in the paper. The social column tells about everybody I know."

"I feel the same way about the Wolverton *Gazette*. Besides — until last spring I was president of the Hemstitching Club."

A few minutes later she went home. Of course she could not understand. Sometimes even Lem did not realize what the home paper meant to me. He rarely glanced at anything in it except the editorial page. A man lives in a larger world than the stay-at-home woman. Friday morning when the children left for school, I used to sit down to read the *Gazette*, and

a paragraph like this would bring an old friend right before my eyes:

Uncle Si Marks from over the mountain delivered cordwood round town Thursday. Everybody had a good word for Uncle Si, and there were more dinner invitations than he could accept.

Dear old Uncle Si! Why, as I sat there I could see him with the rabbit-skin tabs on his cap pulled down over his ears, his white mustache as bristly as an ancient toothbrush, and those kind blue eyes of his with a merry laugh in them. A woman near me at a dinner party one night repeated the clever things Senator Newman gets off. While people shouted with laughter I was wishing I could tell some of Uncle Si's stories. I did not try; they would not have been Uncle Si's unless they had been accompanied by that droll pucker of his mouth and the twinkle in his eyes. His humor is not dug from Egyptian tombs!

Perhaps the *Gazette* is "early villager," whatever that may be. Still every week we lived in Washington it was as welcome as a visit from old Martha Sias and there 's nothing going on in Wolverton or in the country round that Martha does not know. I would not have exchanged its gossip, its verses by local poets, its birth, death and marriage column, or even its patent medicine "ads" for the society pages of the *Post*.

It does not look a bit different from what it did when I was a little girl and used to read it in the evening to mother, after her eyes grew too weak for the close print. Even names are the same, except that to-day

there is a new generation. A noisy bustling city knows little about the quiet, sweet places "on the edge of civilization," as folks in society scornfully call them.

A few days later Daphne came upstairs, with that airy toss of her head which I hated, to say that somebody wanted to see me.

"Who?" I asked.

"Lawdy, you kin search me," she went off into a giggle. "I ain't nebber seed nothin' so cu'jus in all my life. He said he wa' n't gwine to give his name. Mebbe he 's a-peddlin' apples or taters."

"Tell him we don't need any."

"Law, 'tain't no use. He 's set down on a chair in the hall. He 's boun' he 'll see you."

I ran downstairs. Daphne followed to peer curiously over the banisters. I gave a cry of joy and almost ran into the old man's arms; it was Uncle Si Marks from Wolverton! On the floor beside him lay a faded carpet-bag. Somebody had spruced up Uncle Si. He wore a gray slouch hat instead of the old rabbit-skin cap with ear-tabs. He had labored with his bristly mustache till it achieved a Kaiser William flare-up. Otherwise, from the shabby overcoat to those beaming eyes of his, it was the Uncle Si I had known from girlhood. He held my hand between both of his — those great, knotted, warm, rough hands, which had hewn many a tree, then carted the cordwood over the mountains and piled it in Wolverton yards. It was the finest wood that came into town and the most generous measure.

The first thing I asked was how he happened to come to Washington.

Uncle Si smiled. Nobody ever had the engaging smile he has.

"Wal, now, even supposin' I had n't wanted to see the East, don't you believe it was danged worth while comin' clear from Wolverton just to lay eyes on you and Lem?"

When Uncle Si says "danged" it means something! We talked and talked and laughed; sometimes I nearly cried, it was so good to see him standing there. Daphne brought me to my senses; she came through the hall tossing her head and giggling, while her curious eyes were fixed on Uncle Si.

"The grocer 's here, Mis' Shipe," she said.

Uncle Si picked up his carpet-bag and started for the door. After that journey of his across a continent he was headed in search of a hotel. I had the task of my life to make him stop with us.

He stayed for two weeks — there was no coaxing him to linger a day after spring came in. He swore he must be home in March to look through his wood lot. The morning after his arrival the old man and I were wandering about the city, and I remembered the first glimpse Lem and I had of the Capitol, when he lifted Jeff's cap from his head. I saw deep feeling and rare happiness in my husband's face that day — but Uncle Si's reverence was stronger than Lem's. Indeed, I sounded the very depths of Americanism while I was with him. Lem has the patriotism of a middle-aged man and the edge has worn away from

it since our first glimpse of Washington; Uncle Si's patriotism had its birth when our country was in the throes of a great war, and during those fifty years it has been growing stronger and deeper.

As we went about town his dumb silence made me wonder if he was disappointed, but suddenly I understood. We were on our way to see the White House. Uncle Si did not seem eager to follow me; he loitered about the sidewalk, without a glance at the busy throng brushing past him. I leaned against the railing and waited quietly. He turned, and his face lit up.

"Pauline, I reckon I forgot myself and you — I wa' n't thinkin' of nobody but *him.*"

"Who?" I asked.

He looked at me for a moment in surprise. "Why, Lincoln," he answered, in a low tone. "Them trees must have been saplin's in his day, but they 've see'd what I 've wished all my life I could have seen — *him.* I reckon nights during the terrible days of the war he 's come out here alone when the stars were shinin' and he 'd set here with his heart achin' for the sorrows of his country — achin', too, because of the false, wicked things the world was sayin' about him. You don't know anything about them days, child; you must have been born along near the close of the war, but I remember!"

Uncle Si stopped with his eyes fixed on the wide square in front of us. "Yes, I remember. I lived through them. Day an' night when I was a boy I kep' thinkin' of the sore heart inside them walls." He pointed over his shoulder at the long white house

among the trees. "I was just young enough then to lay night after night wettin' my pillow with tears because I could n't go to the front an' fight. There was no use even dreamin' about it. Father had just died; there was mother to care for an' three little ones, an' I was all the help she had. Lord! How it fretted me to do nothin' but plow an' spade an' hew trees when Lincoln kep' callin' for men."

Uncle Si took a ragged old wallet from his pocket. "Pauline," he said slowly, "I 'm goin' to tell you somethin' I hain't spoken of many times in my life. One night — I could n't sleep; the papers had brought us the awful story of Gettysburg and the President was callin' for men — I went outdoors an' lay in the grass till the sun rose. How I wanted to answer that call! Seein' I could n't, I felt I 'd ought to straighten it out with him. Under an old pine tree, with the sun comin' up red over the edge of the mountain, I set down and wrote to Lincoln, tellin' why I could n't come and fight. One day, weeks after —" Uncle Si's voice grew low and solemn —" I got a letter written by himself. Think of it, down here where the hospitals were crowded to the doors with dyin' men, with the whole country cryin' to him,— in the middle of the turmoil and the sorrow,— think of him — settin' down and writin' to me — himself — to say he understood. Nobody but him could have put it the way he did. 'There is real patriotism in doing well the small things of life.' Them very words helped me more 'n once — over many a hard place!"

From the ragged wallet he took a tattered, yellow

sheet with a few lines of faded writing on it. I handled it reverently. At that moment I began to know Uncle Si.

"I 'd rather not do a thing this first day, Pauline, if you don't mind, but just go round to places where he 's been. I 'd like to walk over the streets where his feet have trod, and — child, if I keep silent, you 'll understand?"

I understood. My heart was throbbing with the thought of the boy's silent joy over that letter. While we wandered about the White House I felt impatient for Uncle Si's sake, at the chattering, curious crowd about us. Uncle Si hardly noticed them. He was under the same roof which had sheltered Lincoln — here and there we found something that he had once used.

We spent the day in places which Lincoln's life had touched. Last of all we stood in the room where he died. The man who showed us through the house realized in a few minutes that Uncle Si was no chance excursionist. There is an impressive quiet in the old man's manner, like the dignity we expect from people who occupy high places.

"Who is he?" whispered the custodian while we went downstairs.

"A friend of ours from the West. To him Lincoln is the greatest man that ever lived. He has never been in Washington before."

As we went up the street I saw the man standing on the steps of the old house looking after us.

There were days when I could not spare time to go

about with Uncle Si, but he went alone, wandering over the city and country. Generally he came home at twilight with his face full of a vivid, eager content that was beautiful to watch. Sometimes he spent an afternoon at the House. Senator Trent knew Uncle Si, and loved him as much as we do. He wanted more than once to entertain him, but the senator's ways were not Uncle Si's. He was apt to slip away quietly and politely from anything he called "pomp."

Lem found him at noon one day in a queer little dive on Pennsylvania Avenue lunching on buckwheats and sausage. Opposite sat the proprietor, an ancient slave, who was pouring out to his intent listener the story of days before the war.

One morning when the sun shone as if it were May instead of February, we took a boat down the Potomac to Mount Vernon. I thought I had felt the sanctity of the place and understood it when I went there the first time, but I learned things I had missed till I went with Uncle Si. He seldom spoke, and he stepped gently up and down the narrow stairs. His silence was a perfect tribute to the memory of lives which had been spent there.

We sat in wide chairs on the flag-paved portico, waiting for the first glimpse of our steamer as she came round the bend of the river. The old man leaned forward, smiling eagerly through his heavy spectacles.

"You can fairly see them, can't you — George Washington and Martha — settin' out here, happy and

quiet and peaceful, on moonlight nights. Land! how they must have loved the place!"

Yes, I could see.

Lem and I took Uncle Si to his train. We stayed to watch it go out. He stood on the platform to see the last of us; he felt the parting as much as we did.

"There aren't many folks in the world like Uncle Si, are there, Polly?" said Lemuel as we went through the gate.

"Not a great many," I answered.

The governor of our State spent a few days with us a week later. He was a brilliant man, but he — why — there was no comparison between him and Uncle Si!

XV

THE LITTLE WIDOW

DENSIE and I were sewing one afternoon when the bell rang. I opened the door and looked at a little group on the steps. There was a sweet looking young widow; she did not seem much older than Densie. Beside her stood three little girls, who were so nearly of a size they might have been triplets. They were dressed alike in white frocks and little white caps with strings tied in bows beneath their chins. They wore short, white socks and patent leather slippers on their small feet. The curls, which hung about their cheeks, were as yellow as a duckling's down. They stared up at me with big, wondering blue eyes.

"Is Mrs. Shipe at home?" the mother asked softly.

"I am Mrs. Shipe."

"Oh, I am glad! You look kind and motherly. In this big, cruel city there are few women like you."

"I don't know about that," I remarked. "It has always seemed to me that people get pretty much what they give."

"Not always — if you are poor and unfortunate," she murmured with a sigh.

I invited them in. Densie flew to set the three white-frocked babies on a row of chairs.

"I am Mrs. Gouvernour Lee," explained the little widow. "I hope you will forgive me for intruding as I have done."

I pitied the young thing. I thought of Densie in trailing black weeds with three babies to care for,—still there was something about the girl that was not real. She made me think of a stage widow.

"I came to you," she explained, "because I am afraid to wander about that great Capitol, I dread having doors shut in my face. Besides a woman understands so much better than a man does, what shattered hopes mean, and the pinch for money and a long, heart-breaking delay for news. And — the little ones to — care for." Her voice choked. She put her hands before her face.

The smallest of the babies ran to her. "Car'line has n't been bad, Muzzie," she cried in a piping voice. "Car'line 's been a dood little girl."

The woman clasped the child in her arms. "Mudder knows, Lovey, Car'line has n't been bad."

Densie glanced at me and a minute later led the children out to the porch.

I listened to the woman's story. Even now it is not quite clear in my mind what it was about. She told it with a sob here and there while I looked over the bundle of papers she thrust into my hand. In 1862 her grandfather and uncle had patented a tent which was used by the Northern army during the Civil War. Her uncle had received his share of the rights for it — $30,000, but the Government had never paid her grandfather a cent. Her father took up

the claim and fought for it all his life, till he passed away aged and poverty-stricken by the long, unsuccessful struggle.

"When did your husband die?" I asked.

"Three years ago, when Baby Car'line was ten days old, he was drowned. Life has been terrible since that time."

I kept wishing there was a little more back-bone in the woman, yet I had known hundreds like her, sweet and clinging and childish.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

"Oh," she pleaded, "if Mr. Shipe would only look into my claim."

"My husband has little power," I explained. "A man must be in Congress a good many years before he has much to say about affairs."

"He can influence others. If he could only get me a portion of what was owing grandfather—" She hesitated for a minute and looked at me with those appealing blue eyes of hers. "I would be glad to give Mr. Shipe one-third of the amount if he could put the bill through."

"Don't," I cried. "Don't say a thing like that. A representative takes an oath to serve his country honestly. That is a criminal thing to suggest."

At last she went away. Densie and I stood on the porch watching her go up the street with the three little white-clad children stepping beside her.

"Mother, what do you think of them?" asked Densie.

"I don't know exactly," I answered slowly.

"Those linen frocks the children wore and their lisle thread socks are not cheap, still she said the wolf was howling at the door."

When Lemuel came home I told him about her.

"I 'll look it up," he said, "but those fifty-year-old claims are terribly hard to put through. It 's queer, — why should she have come to you instead of me? I suppose there are women who think it 's an ordeal to reach a congressman. Was she a timid sort of creature?"

"No, I don't think she was timid. In fact I am sure she was n't."

I had a plaintive little note from Mrs. Gouvernour Lee and once again she came with her babies to ask if Mr. Shipe had looked into her case. I felt conscience-smitten that he had not. She was shabbier than the last time I had seen her and I noticed a stubbed hole in the toe of one little patent leather shoe.

"Do find out about her claim," I begged of my husband that night.

The next evening we sat on the porch till quite late. There was a glorious moon and we were loath to go indoors. The city was just beginning to cool off and grow quiet.

"Oh," said Lem, reflectively, "I have news for your little widow."

"Is there a chance for her claim?" I asked eagerly.

He answered my question with another one. "Did you tell her as I suggested, to come to the House and see me?"

"Yes."

"She never showed up. She probably never will. She 's too well-known up there."

"She said she was afraid to go there."

"The last time she was at the House her name was Oliphant, not Lee."

"What do you mean?"

"It 's quite a story. Originally her name was Adams — Julia Adams. Her grandfather and uncle did invent those tents. The government took them over when the war broke out because they were a big improvement on anything they had. Her uncle got half his claim."

"And the grandfather?"

"His claim was never paid. It never will be paid."

"Why?"

"Because when the war broke out, her grandfather's sympathies were all with the South. He joined the rebel army and fell at Shenandoah."

"Yes, she told me he did — but she said emphatically — he was on the Northern side."

"It 's foolish of her to hand out that lie — and it 's foolish to waste her life running after the old claim. She knows it 's perfectly hopeless."

"Only Lem — the Government really owes the money to her grandfather as much as to the other man."

"The $30,000 was his if he had stayed loyal."

"It was rather fine to stick to his principles and lose all that money."

"I suppose you may look at it that way. It's one of those wretched inheritances of hope. The old man — her grandfather — left a wife and son who were in fairly comfortable circumstances. Instead of settling down to work, the boy got it in his head that the Government owed his father money and he would make them pay it. When anybody butts against the Government of the United States he has about as much chance as a wave banging itself against a stone pier. Still he frittered his life away — also what fortune they had and all he could rake and scrape to fight for that old claim. This girl, his only child, was motherless when she was five. He worked her into his schemes. Since babyhood she wandered round with him till he grew frail and doddering — sort of pulling on folks' sympathy."

"It's a tragedy," I cried.

"She doesn't dare come round the House any more. She's too well known — she has bled too many men who have more heart than sense. That's part of her game. Sometimes she gets after a brand new congressman,— as she did through you, hoping he does not know her story. She has roped in young impressionable lawyers who forked out money to her before they looked into the claim."

"She has such an innocent, wistful face, Lem."

"Yes, an old congressman said the same thing to me yesterday. He remembers her when she was in ankle ties toddling round the corridors with her father. It isn't so much her fault," said Lemuel reflectively, "as her misfortune. Since babyhood she

has grown up with one fixed idea; that the United States Government owes her a fortune."

"How does she live?"

"By her wits, I reckon."

"If it were only herself she had to provide for!"

"That 's the worst of it," Lem spoke gravely; "so far as anybody knows she was never married."

"There 's the three babies!"

"They don't belong to her. They're rented or borrowed."

I never saw Mrs. Gouvernour Lee again.

XVI

A "BOOST" FOR LEMUEL

AS the winter wore on we grew accustomed to dining alone. Lemuel's work — even if it was not so very important — began to keep him pretty well tied down. He ate dinner at the House, then went back to his office and sometimes pegged away till midnight. Lemuel was brought up by his grandmother. A stricter old woman never lived and she had the queerest notions about how to raise children. Her method was to set them a stint and they had to finish it before they began anything else. I suppose that has something to do with the way Lem works to-day; he would drop in his tracks rather than leave a job unfinished — if he had made a stint of it.

One night, when we did not expect him home till late, he came in whistling, with Bob perched on his shoulder. I stood in the pantry cutting bread. I knew a stroke of good luck had befallen him as soon as I glanced up. He looked as if he had come straight from Happy Valley. He set Bob on top of the refrigerator and laid a hand on my shoulder.

"Congratulate me, Polly," he said.

"For what?" I asked laughing.

"I 've been put on the district committee!"

"That 's fine, Lem." I was trying to work up an

enthusiasm as hearty as his own, though I scarcely dared confess I did not know what he meant.

"Is it such a weighty honor?" I asked.

"I should think it is a weighty honor. Don't you know the difference between a place on the district and on the ventilation and acoustics committee? That's all I've had so far."

In those days I was densely ignorant. Like the average congressman's wife I began as a know-nothing and had to learn even the phraseology of affairs of state.

Lemuel lifted Bob down and set him out in the hall.

"There, run along, Bubsy; I want to talk to mother. Polly — you're a little greenhorn. I've got to explain what an important thing this is. Men, who have been in the House for years, are pulling wires all the time for a place on the district committee."

"Then — how did you get it?"

"Crawford was stepping out. He had been made chairman of another committee. He went to the speaker and asked that I be put on the district. It was mighty good of him."

"Probably he did it because you gave him your seat. A man beside me that day at the House said Crawford never forgets a courtesy."

"It was an impetuous courtesy. There are times when I feel tucked away in an obscure corner, off in the Cherokee Strip — still it paid."

"Won't this new appointment mean more work?" I asked.

"Yes,— but I'm thankful enough to get a chance

at such work. It 's like running upstairs two steps at the time."

A week later Lemuel and I were invited to a family dinner at the Crawfords. I had called on her and she returned my call — still I did not feel acquainted with her till that night. She was tall and stately with the serene beauty some women preserve through the fifties, when they have had little care or anxiety. That evening, in their quiet, luxurious home, Lem and I learned what fine qualities lay behind the dignity she showed to the outer world. We came away with a warm feeling in our hearts, and a knowledge that we had gained new friends who were worth while. It occurred to me that we might have felt set up in making friends who possessed unlimited influence and unlimited wealth, still somehow I never thought of money or position when I considered the Crawfords. It is a friendship, which has lasted all these years, sometimes interrupted by months of silence, but we always stood ready for a happy moment to bring us together again and take up the comfortable intimacy just where it had dropped.

I have always loved one trait in Mrs. Crawford. She never speaks an unkind word about any one. I find myself constantly measuring people up to a certain standard for loyalty, sincerity, in short for being decent citizens, and before I think, I say things I am sorry for later. Mrs. Crawford has ideals higher than mine. She was brought up in a world I have only had a glimpse at occasionally during late years and some of the people with whom she is thrown must

jar upon her horribly. If they do, she never speaks of it. She wears that serene, lovely dignity, that one can not acquire as they do outside manners; it is the guinea stamp of well-bred ancestors.

Sometimes I stood by watching and marveling at the winsome ease with which she received the struggling throng of climbers, who surged into her home. A hostess in the official life of Washington faces conditions which confront society nowhere else, because her door is literally thrown open to any one who chooses to enter. The multitude which comes is a strange one, its only passport for admission is genteel clothing, a well-filled card case and — nerve.

After a month or two, callers began to troop in on me. I received on Tuesday as all congressional women do and before the winter was far along a card basket in the hall was heaped high. Some were from women returning my calls, I knew at least who they were. There were others, groups who chatted with easy familiarity, drank a cup of tea, then drifted out to make a round of the congressional homes. They were well-dressed women and wore the regulation manners of society. I accepted their calls as a courtesy and generally tried to return them. Occasionally I had strange experiences. I found that scores of women went calling with fictitious addresses engraved on their cards, sometimes it was a fashionable apartment house, or a number on some fine street, and I had not the slightest clue as to who they were. Frequently, if I did find them, it was in very tawdry, common surroundings. As I became acquainted

with congressional women I found they had the same difficulty. It is an utter impossibility for the official hostess to prevent her reception day from becoming a free-to-all scramble.

When I joined the Congressional Club, calling became less of a burden, besides I had a chance to make the acquaintance of women, who were worth knowing. Smart writers have fallen into the habit of jibing the congressman's wife. As a rule it is harsh injustice. Among four hundred women, picked from every State in the union, you find a representative occasionally of types that occur in every community: the superficial, the brainless, the creature bursting with silly ambition, sometimes the woman who is no better than she ought to be.

Looking on as I did during our four years in Washington, and coming in close contact with women from every State, I know this, that the jeers of journalists are undeserved. Of course those four hundred are a cosmopolitan group, strangely cosmopolitan and strangely varied—"queer bed-fellows" somebody once called them. They range from the creature of fashion, who has never had to lift a finger for herself, to the woman who once earned her daily bread by the humblest tasks. Some of them have risen step by step from a very lowly place in the world; a few, like their husbands, are almost self-educated. Barring out a very small minority, they are women of rare common sense and high ideals. They are good mothers and wives—interested in their husbands' work, and studying subjects few women find attrac-

tive, wholly from one reason, that they may be able helpmeets. Frequently I saw instances of real chivalry among men who recognized what their wives had been to them. Among the biographies of the "Congressional Directory" I found a tribute by a Western senator to his wife, which almost canonized the man in the eyes of one woman. "I was married," he says, "in the fall of 1886 and whatever success I have attained has been due to the earnest, faithful help and cheerful self-denial of my wife."

Occasionally — when a woman dies, her husband comes out with a post-mortem declaration of this sort, chiseling it on her gravestone or adding it like a printed sob to her obituary. Then — it is like the flowers which strew her coffin — it cannot warm a heart which has ceased to throb.

XVII

MRS. DECKER COMES BACK

WE had only known the Crawfords for a week or two when she 'phoned to ask if I would pour tea at an afternoon affair she was giving. I said "yes" instantly. It was a compliment to be invited to help such a hostess.

"I 'm going to explain, Mrs. Shipe," she said, "before you give me a positive 'yes.' Mr. Crawford wishes me to ask Mrs. Benton to assist, as a courtesy to her husband."

Into my mind flashed the image of the silly, little Mrs. Benton. She was probably the most insignificant woman in the congressional set. I sized her up the first time I met her as a trivial, insignificant little butterfly.

"She would be with you at the tea table," explained Mrs. Crawford. "If you would rather not come, don't hesitate to say so."

"I 'll be delighted to come. I can get along nicely with Mrs. Benton."

I had just bought a new black gown,— oh, it was such a relief after the blue one, and I wore it that afternoon.

Densie helped me to dress and fixed my hair. The dear child came home from school flushed and eager,

bringing me some lovely red roses. They must have cost every penny of her week's allowance. When I was dressed she made me stand at one end of the hall and walk towards her slowly. We had no long mirror and she wanted to see if I was all right.

"You will be the dearest, sweetest, genteelest looking mother there," she cried. "I am so proud of you."

"Not the prettiest?" I asked.

"No, not the prettiest." Densie grew grave. "There are lots of younger mothers, some of them beauties and fashionable and elegantly dressed, but there 's not a sweeter mother among them. I am proud to own a mother who has n't a bit of false hair on her head or a touch of paint or powder on her face."

"Don't, Densie child," I cried, "don't make me vain. You know what an absurd looking old mother I would be in paint and powder and false curls."

Then she came down to usher me off in the carriage and kiss me good-by.

Mrs. Crawford had asked me to come early so I was the first guest there. The house looked charming, it was a stately old home where they had lived for years, gathering all sorts of beautiful things about them. It always seemed to me exactly the setting for the serene-faced lady with her white hair and exquisite manners. I followed her from one room to another while she put the last touch to a drapery or rearranged a vase of flowers.

"Oh," I exclaimed when we entered the dining-

room and paused beside the table, "this is lovely."

The sun shone into every room. It was more cheerful than the gleam of candles, besides artificial light could not have discovered such wonderful deep reds in the old mahogany table as the sunbeams did. They shone translucent through exquisite china and sparkled on the tall silver urn. A glass bowl held yellow daffodils and gold dishes filled with nuts and bonbons were scattered about on the lace cloth.

"I am glad to have you here, Mrs. Shipe," said my hostess. "One needs tact to get along with Mrs. Benton."

The guests began to arrive and Mrs. Crawford left me, to join a group of friends in the west parlor. Mrs. Benton rustled in late, so late that I asked a waiter to help serve the people who began to drift into the dining-room. She was a little lady with sharp, black eyes. She dressed ridiculously for a woman of fifty. That afternoon she wore a flamboyant pink hat as large as a diminutive parasol, over masses of black hair. She nodded to me in a disdainful fashion, pulled off her gloves and sat down in front of the coffee-urn. I had always seen her in a gushy mood, that day she was cross and unmannerly. She was effusive to a few of her intimates but she did not treat all of Mrs. Crawford's guests as the hostess herself would have done.

A young girl I knew slipped up beside me and whispered, "Can't I help? Mrs. Benton is not looking after people as she ought to do. She's in a 'peeved' mood. I've seen her like this before."

I thanked her for I did need help. During a lull when the dining-room was almost empty, I discovered the reason for the lady's "peeved" mood. I heard her complain to a woman who stood beside the table sipping coffee.

"I don't call it 'ridiculous,'" her black eyes snapped wrathfully, "it was perfectly aggravating. I'd have walked out and driven straight home when I found I was expected to pour coffee — if it had n't been for what my husband might have said. He swears by Crawford and it would have thrown him into a perfect grouch."

"You did n't understand then?" murmured her friend consolingly.

"Of course — I did n't — understand. She 'phoned me to assist. I supposed I was to stand in line with her, so I dressed for that. I wore long gloves and took off every ring, even my wedding-ring. They cut my gloves so." She threw her bare hands out as if begging for sympathy. "To think of pouring — with not a solitary diamond on — and this nasty old coffee — I always did hate pouring coffee. I can't do it without slopping."

She glared across the table at me while I lifted the silver pot. For a moment I thought of offering to exchange with her, then — I did n't. There is a limit to every-day courtesy. A few minutes later I talked with a pleasant little woman who stopped for a cup of tea. She had a daughter who was a classmate of Densie's and we were discussing Washington schools, when I stopped in the middle of a sentence

to listen. I heard a voice which seemed strangely familiar. A minute later the little lady was pushed aside by Mrs. Decker of Wolverton. I never knew her well, though we grew up within five miles of each other. I jumped to my feet and I guess I fairly beamed at her. I had forgotten how meanly her husband treated Lem before election. Things like that go out of your mind when you meet people from home, especially if your home is clear across a continent. She was gracious but she had a condescending air, just as she would have had in Wolverton. She had grown stout and red-faced. She was laced within an inch of her life into a blue satin gown that had some strange trimming like peacock feathers splashed all over it. She came in with Representative Dart's wife who wore a bright purple dress. While they talked I wondered why they should go out together, wearing those colors.

As they moved away Mrs. Decker smiled and said, "I am so glad you like Washington, Mrs. Shipe. The life here must be a great novelty to *you*. It is n't a bit like church sociables in Wolverton, is it?"

I was alone for a minute. Then a woman who lived across the street from us brought two pretty girls for a cup of tea. They were chatting about a play we had both seen, when above the hum of conversation I heard Mrs. Decker's voice. It is the sort of voice you cannot mistake for any other, with shrill tones which could be heard across a half-acre lot.

"Yes, I knew Mrs. Shipe at home — by sight. Oh, no, never intimately, dear me, no! The Shipes never

moved in our social circle! There's a very small social circle in Wolverton, only five or six families, I reckon, but the Shipes were n't in it. I doubt if they ever got their noses high enough to look over the fence. Augustus felt a little sore at being thrown down by a man like Lem Shipe, a nobody, come of folks just as she is, common as dirt. Besides, Shipe had never done a thing for the party. Still, what can you expect, living in our part of the country where hayseeds and *hoi polloi* control the votes. If it were n't that Gus has business interests out West, we'd move East among cultured people. Give me little, old New York every time."

I sat there listening while somebody waited for a cup of tea. I poured it and asked whether she would have lemon or cream. I think I smiled and said, "Yes, it was the loveliest day I remembered — and we did have such delightful winters in Washington," then I poured another cup of tea.

I talked and smiled but all the time I was listening to Mrs. Decker. The shrill tones seemed to pierce my ears and heart.

I heard another voice above the hum and talk. It was low and distinct, a voice with beautiful intonations. I heard it say, "I really don't think it can be the same lady you are speaking about. Senator Trent was talking with me the other night about Mrs. Shipe. I promised if she did not call on me soon — he said she was a very busy woman — that I would call on her. He said she was a charming woman and a thoroughbred."

Mrs. Decker laughed, her laugh is worse than her voice. "A thoroughbred — the senator must have got his wires crossed. My dear — she was married — at eight o'clock — in the Wolverton Baptist Church."

A lady came and introduced herself to me. It was the woman with the beautiful voice. She spoke of Senator Trent's friendship for us and of how highly he esteemed Lemuel. She said her name was Mrs. Daggett. She stayed only a minute, a fresh crowd came in for tea and I was kept busy till the rooms emptied. It was quite late when I said good-by to Mrs. Crawford. I had told the cabman not to come back because generally one can find a herdic on the Circle. They were all gone and the cars were crowded — there was not even standing-room in them. I walked home up Sixteenth street. It took me half an hour but during that time my face grew cool and the anger died down in my heart because I was beginning to realize how little such things matter. Just the same it hurt, oh, I confess it hurt,— terribly.

XVIII

PEOPLE WHO WERE WORTH WHILE

DURING the early spring, committee work piled up heavily and Lem often toiled till late into the night. One day he 'phoned that he might be through at five and if lessons were out of the way before dinner-time, he would give his evening to the children.

They had a great time. When Lem has nothing on his mind, he is like a big, frolicsome boy. At last the racket was over, the children went upstairs and we had an hour or two alone. Lemuel lit his pipe, stretched back in a big chair and looked the picture of content.

I told him so.

"I am fairly content, Polly," he confessed. "There's only one cloud on the horizon. It's Decker. He has begun already — in a way — that isn't exactly the square deal — to work for the next nomination."

As he told the story it made my blood boil.

"When a man opposes his enemy front to front, he can fight; that's a fair battle. But the political bushwhacker, who drops a blasting word here and there, or makes a statement which is half a truth and half a lie, how are you going to cross swords with a

dastard like that? Besides Decker is scattering money everywhere."

"How long have you known this?" I asked.

"Oh, for weeks."

"And you kept it to yourself?"

"Polly, why should I bring it home to worry you? Goodness knows, between the children and the house and trying to put the family's best foot foremost, you have enough to do."

A woman judges double dealing and hyprocrisy more severely than a man does. What I hated most in Decker was the way he set forth his virtues. In his own eyes he was the reincarnation of Washington, Lincoln and the greatest patriots who ever lived, yet he was rotten to the core. That wonderful self-esteem of his carried him along for years, till people found him out. The West will not stand for a man when it has made up its mind that he is a low, contemptible hound.

During Shelby's campaign, Lem had to endure such abuse, misrepresentation and mean personal attacks that it infuriates me now to think of it. Later we discovered that the worst of it was not inspired by Democrats, they would have fought — decently. Behind the calumny stood Decker and his money. He was so furious at having the nomination snatched from him he went burrowing underground to wreak his passion on Lem.

Both of us sat silent for a minute. We were thinking of the same thing.

"Lem," I asked, "have we got to go back to Wol-

verton and face the venomous sort of fight Decker will put up, for a nomination?"

"I don't know, Polly." The weary look in my husband's eyes made me pity him. "I 'm hoping not. I have an idea the district would n't stand for it. They found him out once. Reeding used some strong language in an editorial the other day. He said if you began to investigate Decker's past you must do it with a clothes-pin on your nose and rubber gloves on your hands. Then — people hate — her so."

"Did you know she is here — in town?"

"No," Lem looked surprised.

I had not intended to tell him what happened at the Crawford tea. Men look with supreme scorn on any picayune fuss a woman gets into. Only — this was different. Besides it had hurt! Before I knew it I told him the whole story.

Lemuel seldom swears. When he does it is never over trifling things, it takes something big and scurrilous and despicable to make him use the language he did that night. I listened and enjoyed it, because Mrs. Decker deserved every word he said. When he quieted down he asked.

"Who was the woman that came forward and did the square thing by you?"

"Her name was Daggett."

"Daggett," he repeated. "I wonder if it could have been Senator Daggett's wife. What did she look like?"

"She was a little woman, plain looking and simply

dressed. She had wavy gray hair and brown eyes. She might have been sixty years old."

"I should n't wonder if it were she. I met her once with the senator. I remember her voice better than her face. She had a very pleasant voice."

"Yes, her voice is beautiful; I noticed it more than I might have done because Mrs. Decker's voice is so dreadful."

"The Daggetts are at the top of the tree socially. He has money, millions of it — but that is n't what counts. The man himself is a power. He stands for the best and highest statesmanship. They have been here for twenty years. Somebody was talking about them the other day. Climbers try to get into their crowd but they don't often succeed. It counts in Washington to be a friend at the Daggett house. Trent and he are great cronies."

"Yes, she spoke of the senator."

"She was a thoroughbred to step in as she did." Lem's voice had a hearty ring in it. "If the chance ever comes I 'll thank her for it. Only, now it is war with Decker, war to the knife."

A week later Mrs. Daggett called. "I know it is not your day at home," she said genially, "but I wanted to find you alone. I did not wait for you to make the formal call, the weary round takes so long. It 's a duty which ought to be cut out when women have their hands so full,— as you have. Senator Trent told me a good deal about you and the children."

A Washington caller seldom stays more than ten minutes. Mrs. Daggett stopped to visit for two

hours. I bade her good-by reluctantly. We had a long, intimate talk. I did not think while we were together, why I liked the woman; it was liking then, later it grew to be love. For one thing, she was absolutely natural.

After a few months in Washington you turn with an eager welcome to a woman who is genuine. I never can understand why so many women are artificial. They do not perk and strut and bedeck themselves altogether for their own sex. It is for men they pose. And men — the sort of men whose admiration is worth while — look on and do a lot of thinking, which is not exactly — a salaam!

One evening at a reception I sat in a corner talking with an old admiral, who is one of our country's heroes. A beautiful woman stopped for a moment to speak to him, to wave her fan, and murmur meaningless, complimentary nothings. He listened with a courteous smile. When she took her escort's arm and went fluttering down the room, I turned to look at him. The smile had gone from his lips.

"You are tired," I said.

"Yes, I am tired of women who are not themselves. Did you ever think, Mrs. Shipe, that we have grown so used to veneer, it's like clothes — we don't dare appear in public without it. Now, there's a woman," he pointed to the lady who had just left us. "She's a good woman, sweet and kindly and simple in her own home, devoted to her husband and children. I've seen her in the bosom of her family, so I know. As soon as she joins the procession, she puts on a

smile as you would a mask, she flatters, prevaricates and lies, gets off clever little speeches and epigrams she could not have originated to save her soul. She does n't know what a fool she makes of herself. If she were to stand in front of a mirror,— alone at home,— and act for ten minutes as she does in society, she would creep into a corner from very shame. Why does she do it?"

"I don't know," I acknowledged.

"Why do any of them do it?" the admiral went on reflectively. "Even my own wife has a touch of it. She trims her sails and goes along with the fleet, doing pretty much what they do. She smiles sweetly on women whom I know she privately despises and hates. In the depth of every man's heart is something which responds at once to the real in folks, and it brings to the surface the best traits in him."

I do not think I was ever so ambitious as Lem to be "somebody." Still I wished for a place in a certain grade of society,— I thought it would help my husband and the children. When Mrs. Daggett came into my life I needed such a friend terribly. She drew us into a little circle where I met men and women whom it was a privilege to know.

Occasionally she asked me to go calling with her. One day we spent an hour in brief visits to one magnificent home after another. I called them homes, they were not homes — they were simply rooms filled with splendid furniture like those in a hotel palace. While orchestras played, women had to shout at each other.

The afternoon sunshine was shut out, electricity glowed under huge, dim lamps, and flowers were so lavish the house smelt of them. Women in exquisite gowns and dazzling jewels smiled as they greeted us, but I saw weariness under the paint on their faces.

"I have left one place which is worth while till the last," said Mrs. Daggett when it began to grow dusk. "Now, if you can go with me we will spend a half hour with Mrs. Stanley."

"The wife of Justice Stanley of the Supreme Court?" I asked.

"Yes."

I hesitated. "I do not know if I ought to go or not, I did call on her once."

"This is not a formal call," said Mrs. Daggett.

In the Corcoran Gallery hangs a picture of a simple, beautiful room where a silver-haired lady sits in the sunshine. I have never forgotten it. The artist put more into it than a background and a figure, he painted an atmosphere, quiet, restful and homelike. The first time I saw it I remembered Mrs. Stanley's room. She sat knitting beside a window. A pot filled with white Roman hyacinths stood on the sill and a gray cat lay blinking at us from a cushion.

It was a home which told of wealth, still I never thought of money while we were there. Sheeny, soft-tinted, Oriental rugs covered the floor but they were as homelike and cosy as our rag carpets at Wolverton. A few fine pictures hung on the walls and the late afternoon sunshine brought out gleams of crimson and maroon in the old mahogany. There were books

everywhere. I felt repose and beautiful simplicity as I entered.

When we drew our chairs up beside a table to drink a cup of tea — real tea, hot and freshly brewed — my eye fell on a little silver frame which held an illuminated verse:

> Now stir the fire and close the shutters fast,
> Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
> And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
> Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
> That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
> So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

Even while I say the verse over to myself I can see that quiet, beautiful room. I had learned the poem when I was a little girl. Mother loved Cowper's simple verses so I grew up in close familiarity with many of them. A woman I met lately called Cowper a fourth-rate poet and a stodgy, old fossil. She said she preferred Le Galliene. She looked it! Cowper put into these few lines the feeling one has for four walls where we can shut the door on the world and gather about us the few we love.

XIX

OUR SELF-INVITED GUEST

ONE morning after breakfast Lemuel pulled a letter from his pocket.

"Pauline, read this, won't you. I've got to answer it before night. It came Saturday."

I stared at Lem in astonishment when I laid it down.

"It's unprecedented nerve! Why should we invite Barney Webb's daughter to visit us?"

Lemuel laughed mirthlessly. "That's what I asked myself. There's no earthly reason except that old Webb headed a delegation from Clyde county which helped my nomination."

"I've seen Barney but I never set eyes on the wife and daughter. Are we under any obligation to them?"

"No more than to any man who brought me a batch of votes. If all the delegates from the second district were to quarter their women folk on us, we might as well shut up shop. Only," he added, sympathetically, "it's worse for you than me, Polly. All I have to do is hand out a little more money for household expenses."

"Then we've got to have her?"

"I can't see what else to do. I dare n't jeopardize things at home. I'm going to have the fight of my

life this campaign. Jim Cobb of Rawleigh has his eye on the nomination, I heard last week of a man in Casper county who has hopes, so I 've got to pull every string in sight."

"Lem," I asked hesitatingly, "do you believe it 's worth the worry? Would n't you be as happy — possibly happier — back home in Wolverton — building up a practice and away from a life we 're not cut out for?"

He turned sharply on his heel. "Who 's not cut out for it?"

"We all fit in better in Wolverton than we do here."

He began to tramp up and down the dining-room. "I 'm just beginning to stick my toes into the second rung of the ladder and I like — climbing. After three or four terms there 's no reason in the world why I should n't be governor. We have n't a big man in sight out home. Later it might be the senate and then —"

He dropped into a chair beside the window. A furious rain-storm was lashing the streets. I stood watching the drops spatter against the glass.

"And then — ?" I asked.

"Nobody can tell about — then. I know one thing. The West is going to make the East and the South and the Middle West sit up and take notice before ten years go by! We 've got the country, we 've got the men, the money is coming our way and we are feeling our oats!"

I laughed. "Lem, you 've gone back to farming — in your mind."

He walked out into the hall and returned with his overcoat. "It 's only in my mind I ever will go back to farming. Now let 's settle it about this Webb girl. In my opinion it is a blamed imposition — still — you see how I stand."

"Write and tell them we 'll make it as pleasant for her as we can."

"Densie may enjoy her visit. They 're about the same age, I fancy. Perhaps you 'll like her."

"I don't believe I could like anybody who thrusts herself on a stranger in this fashion."

For three days we lived in steady expectation of Harriet Webb's arrival. We waited dinner for her night after night. The only news we received was a postal which said she had been detained somewhere; she was making a series of visits between New York and Washington. While I dusted the parlor one morning I saw a girl come flying up the steps. A cabman followed tugging a huge trunk. I ran to open the door.

She was tall, superbly tall, handsome, elegantly gowned, and quite unlike any one I had ever seen in Wolverton.

"Is Mrs. Shipe at home?" she demanded haughtily.

"I am Mrs. Shipe."

"Why!" I encountered a glance of amused astonishment. Suddenly I remembered an all-over apron and that I had forgotten to pull down my sleeves.

"Is this Miss Webb?"

"Yes," she unbent slightly, looked down at me with a puzzled smile and shook hands.

"You must excuse me—" she began. "I thought—"

"You thought I was the servant."

She nodded. She was so perfectly free from embarrassment that it was funny. "You see I never met a congressman's wife before."

"Don't size them all up by me. Some of them are exceedingly stylish. Come upstairs; your room is ready."

She looked around with a supercilious air. Densie had given up her room for our guest and was occupying a tiny chamber on the top floor. In the Lenox Street house it was impossible to make the old furnace send any heat to the third floor unless we reduced downstairs to freezing point.

"This is a nice little room," she allowed. "Only I shan't have much space left when my trunks come in."

They were enormous trunks. It took the cabman half an hour to get them into place, then she wrangled for five minutes over his charge.

When we moved away from Lenox-street I discovered that she paid less for the transportation of her trunks than we did. The lynx-eyed landlady itemized extravagantly the damage they did to her staircase.

Every congressman who comes to Washington has to go through at some time or other the experience

of entertaining his constituents or their families. The burden fell upon us more than once but our first guest was an experience that stands alone in my memory. Other visitors showed some tact and appreciation. We received less consideration from Harriet Webb than a courteous woman gives to her landlady in a boarding-house. I left her to settle her room and went downstairs with a sinking heart. It was Monday morning. In consideration of doing the laundry, Daphne positively declined any other duty on Monday, so on the first day of the week my hands were usually full. When the children came home for lunch, I ran upstairs to call my guest. She suggested I send up luncheon on a tray. She had not unpacked and it was a nuisance to dress. Afterwards she planned to take a nap, then she would come down for dinner and feel fresh for an engagement she had made to spend the evening with Dupont circle friends.

Densie carried up the tray. She had looked forward with anticipation to a visit from a girl of her own age. When she returned to the dining-room I glanced up curiously. I expected to see disappointment in the child's face. Instead, her eyes blazed angrily and there were spots of red on her cheeks.

"Are you going to like Miss Webb?" I asked.

"Like her, Mother? She 's detestable."

I did not speak.

"Is n't she nice?" asked Jeff.

"Don't mention her to me," snapped Densie.

When we were alone she came and stood behind my chair for a minute.

"Dear little Mother, that girl's going to step all over you if you don't watch out."

"What did she do, child?"

"It made me wild to see my pretty room in the mess she has it in already, but — to be told to hang up her gowns, put her shoes away, lay underwear in the drawers and fetch her a handkerchief!"

"You would do it for me," I suggested.

"Oh, Mother, every blessed one of us would do anything for you. But not for — her."

"You can't be friends then?"

"Certainly not."

Densie is tiny and slight; when she puts on a haughty air it is amusing.

"I don't believe I want you to be friends, only, dear, treat her as well as you possibly can; it means a great deal to father."

"I 'll try to be courteous to her, that 's all."

Perhaps it was better for Densie that she did hold the girl in contemptuous dislike. If she had not she might frequently have been hurt to the quick.

As I learned about the girl's life I understood. When they went West, her parents were as low in the social scale as people can be who are decent. Harriet was a child when they made a sudden leap from poverty to wealth. She was sent straight to a fashionable boarding-school in the East and had seldom gone home again. Life at vacation time was merely a flitting from the home of one wealthy schoolmate to another.

"Why did you come to Washington?" I asked

one afternoon while she sat waiting for a carriage.

"Don't you know, Mrs. Shipe, everybody comes to Washington sometime or other? I know some Annapolis cadets and lots of girls who live here, so I was crazy to come."

"Why did you honor us with a visit?"

She smiled sweetly. "Mama has a few old-fashioned notions and I had n't any invitation from here — I kept writing to her about coming — I wanted to go to a hotel but she would n't let me. Then papa thought of Mr. Shipe, he 'd done him some favor, had n't he — turned over votes to him or something like that? — so he wrote and told you I was coming. I reckon he said I was the apple of his eye. He 's always getting that off."

"Your father seems very fond of you."

"He is, poor old dad! He wants me to go to Europe with him. Not on your life! When I go, it 's with a fashionable party. No trotting around Europe with pa. Why, he 'd queer me anywhere."

"Queer you?"

"I reckon you never saw pa. He 's the funniest little fat dub with a bunch of alfalfa on his chin. Mother 's short on inches too. I can't imagine where I got my figure. Pa had no advantages. Great Scott, I 'll never forget when he took me to Bar Harbor and made a bluff about signing the register. He did n't want the clerk to know he could do nothing but make his mark."

"Does n't he write you every day?"

"Yes," the girl shrugged her shoulders. "Every

day of his life he dictates a letter to me. It 's the funniest thing you ever read."

"Do you answer them?" I asked.

"I answer a bunch of them when I want dough. I 'll say this for dad, though, he 's the most generous old thing that stands in shoe leather."

When I understood the girl, her callousness wore on me less and I became accustomed to her lack of courtesy. Before she came, we had planned to entertain her in various ways but she lifted that burden from my shoulders. She had a host of acquaintances in Washington. She knew the army crowd at Fort Myer, Annapolis cadets and a throng of young men and women in the gay element of the city.

Her friends came and went, calling for her, bringing her home, inviting her to all sorts of festivities with the same disregard of us that she had. Before she had been in our house a week I began to look upon her as a roomer who required waiting upon but none of the courtesies that a hostess gives to a guest.

Miss Webb's visit came abruptly to an end.

Bob spent a wakeful, feverish night and in the morning I sent for the doctor.

"It 's the measles," he announced. "It will be a light case, I fancy, still the rest of the household must be quarantined."

Our guest was in bed when I told her the news.

"Measles! Mercy! Mrs. Shipe, don't come near me. I never had them in my life. There 's a girl in school with horribly red eyelids,— the measles did it, she said. You 'll have to excuse me, but I must

go. Don't bother about breakfast, I can eat at a hotel down town. Call a taxi, won't you? I can get ready in an hour. I 'll go to Baltimore; Millie Page keeps begging me to come back there. Can't Densie help me pack?"

"Densie has been helping with Bob all the morning. She might carry infection."

"Send Daphne then. Mercy! I must go."

I washed the dishes while Daphne turned lady's maid. An hour later Harriet Webb had gone bag and baggage. For two days we picked up forgotten belongings of hers from all over the house. I packed them in a box and Lem expressed it with the dues paid. It is three years since the girl visited us. Till this day I have never received a word from her. The old father thanked us, however, and at the next convention he stood stanchly by Lemuel.

XX

SENDING JEFF HOME

I WAS brought face to face one night with a situation to which I had not given a thought. Densie was at a party and Lem had not come home for the House was holding a late session. After Bob was in bed I helped Jeff with some algebra examples and when they were finished he sprawled out on the couch with his feet on a chair.

"What a young giant you are getting to be, Sonny," I said.

He laughed, then he put his arms under his head and lay watching me for a minute. "Mother, throw your work away and let me talk to you. You are eternally sewing."

I laughed. "I have to sew, Sonny; you would be a tattered mob if I did n't."

"Well, don't to-night, I want to talk to you."

I laid Bob's little shirt in my work-basket. "Now, what is it, more pocket money?"

"No! Mother. Are we coming back to Washington next winter?"

"Of course, Sonny. Why?"

"Because I 'm sick and tired of it here, that 's all."

"Why, Jeff!" His outburst took my breath away; the boy had seemed happy enough.

"I don't like school. I 'm not stuck on any of the teachers, but I hate Miss Beall."

"Sonny!"

"I mean it," he cried fiercely, "I hate women like her. She 's sweet and soft all the time. And, Mother, think of the things she gives us for compositions; yesterday she made us describe our bedrooms. That was all right for the girls; they told about embroidered bureau covers and sweet little pictures and window-seats with pillows. Would you like to see what I wrote."

I said I would.

It was terribly hard to keep grave while I read it, because I felt Jeff's sharp eyes upon me.

"What did she say about this?"

"She said it was sarcasm and the worst composition in the class. I reckon it was. Last week she made us write on how it feels to be sick! Mother, if she would quit treating boys like nanny goats *I* 'd do better. I *can* write when I want to. Old Pugsley gave me a hundred for my composition on the American Indian. If she would let me tell about going swimming or camping or sliding down hill or owls or birds' eggs or sports or pirates or anything that is n't flubby-goo, but 'How it feels to be sick'! One of these days I 'll give her a bat on the snoot."

"Sonny, you would not bat a woman in the snoot?"

"I reckon I would n't," answered Jeff slowly. "Of course I know I would n't. Only I 'd like to try it on her once to see if she 'd quit smiling."

He lay silent for a few minutes and I did a lot of

thinking. They were conscience-stricken thoughts. I realized Jeff needed more love and sympathy and companionship than I had been giving him. Then I, too, had taken a dislike to Miss Beall, the first time I met her. She was not the sort of woman who can make the best of boys — the right sort of boys — not girl-boys. I know from long years of school-ma'am experience exactly what boys are — and I had not been keeping Jeff so close to me as I did in the old days at home.

There was a long pause, then Jeff spoke. "It 's Jim dandy, Mother, for Densie and you in Washington, but — I like Wolverton best. The playgrounds here with their wading pools and perpendicular bars and swing boats don't touch me a little bit. Loon Creek or Stubbs Hill would knock them silly any day. Then the kids! Have you noticed the kids here, Mother?"

"Not closely," I confessed.

"You ought to have a look at them. Whole bunches of them are as much alike as twins. They ride to school on the cars, some of them wear eye-glasses. One boy has a nurse take him home. His mother does not allow him on the streets alone. They play in Dupont circle among little girls that roller skate or throw diabolo."

I did not dare to smile, the contempt in Jeff's voice was withering.

"There 's forty boys in our room and there 's not enough to make a gang. Ten makes a good enough gang. Jakey Ulm and me have been trying for weeks

to get a gang together but we can't. There are n't three real boys. All they want to do is — read or — go to dancing school or vaudeville shows or parties. You ought to see the books they read."

"What?"

"Well, Percy Harris told the teacher yesterday when she asked what our favorite books were, that his was 'The Children on the Top Floor.' She said that was a lovely little story."

"You never read it did you, Sonny?"

"Mother, what do you suppose I am? She does n't approve of books with smugglers or pirates or Indians in them. She tells us to read Sir Walter Scott. I 've tried and got tired before I came to the story. Then there 's nature study! Old Miss Bisley teaches it. She could n't tell a grasshopper from a sheep tick if they got mixed. Just the same she keeps mooning about the charm of the great out-door world and goes round Saturdays spying at birds, with an opera glass!"

"I 'm sorry, Jeff, I ought to have understood."

"Mother, I 'm not kicking," cried the boy eagerly. "I know you don't understand but you can't think how much more fun it was in school at home. The kids in Wolverton know something even if they can't two-step or talk French or wear little dinky caps set back on their heads. Besides there 's never any snow here to speak of and you can't slide down hill. There are n't hills anyway, where they 'll let you slide. If we tried to have a snowball fight the cops would nab us. I 'm away behind all the fellows of my age.

You can't go to school in Wolverton two months then jump in here in the middle of a term and catch on. Old Pugsley can beat Miss Beall to a standstill on *real* things."

"What are we going to do about it, Sonny. They won't discharge Miss Beall because *you* don't like her."

"Mother, don't you worry nor worry father. He needs you here. Father's a trump, I'm proud as blazes of him. Some day he's going to be a great man. You're a trump too, Mother — only —"

"Only what, Sonny?"

Jeff jumped off the sofa, perched himself on the arm of my chair and leaned his cheek against mine. It's a way he had when he was a little chap before I cut his curls off,— a sweet, insinuating way when he wanted anything.

"Supposing, Mother, just supposing — that next fall you left me at home with Aunt Margaret. I could go back to old Pug. Cousin Walt and I would have great times together and I'd study like a good one."

"Only, Sonny." He sat stroking my hair with his rough hands. I could hardly speak for the lump in my throat. "Sonny, what would I do without you?"

Just then Lem came in with Densie. He had called for her when the party was over. Her face was flushed and her hair tumbling down. She was laughing and happy. The child was beginning to look lovelier every day.

"Mother," whispered Jeff as he bent down to kiss

me good-night, "don't you worry, I 'm going to turn over a new leaf and like things. It 's a shame I was n't a girl. Washington 's great for girls."

Julia Ward Howe once said, "The real force that counts in this world is not horse-power, it is mother-power." I had a ridiculous idea that I could help Lem and the children by winning power in a social way,—that night Jeff taught me a lesson.

Before I talked over the boy's discontent with Lem, I went to see Mrs. Daggett.

"I 'll tell you what I did," she said, "while my husband was in Congress. We had three boys, my eldest was fifteen the first winter we came to Washington. Our home city in those days was nothing but a big country town and the schools were very much like country schools with woods and fields all around them. The novelty of city life wore off in a few weeks and the boys began to feel as Jeff does. They grew absolutely homesick for our big, rambling old house, for the gardens and their ponies and dogs. After that session I never came to Washington except for a short visit, till they were grown up."

"It must have been lonely for your husband," I suggested.

"It was,—worse than lonely. It was his first winter of hotel life and neither of us ever took kindly to the publicity of such a home. He ran up as often as he could to spend Sunday with us, then there were the blessed short sessions, but we never tried to live here till all the boys were in college."

"I can not arrange it that way." I was thinking of our journey across the continent.

"No, it would be an impossibility for you, besides I had no daughter, and Densie ought to spend the winters here."

"Jeff wants to go to Aunt Margaret," I suggested.

"Send him," she advised. "If we had had an Aunt Margaret in our home I would have decided for her in a minute."

We talked about other things, but before I left we got back to the subject of home.

"I doubt," said Mrs. Daggett, "if America realizes how much it exacts of its congressmen and senators in the matter of giving up their homes. Most people have not the slightest conception of what it means to us. Magazines and newspapers picture the splendor of an inaugural ball or White House reception and all the gaud and glitter of fashionable life. There are women — they are not like you and me — to whom a winter in Washington is the very acme of ambition. It means a round of dress parade, of seeing and being seen — of figuring as an official hostess, of being written up and pictured in papers or magazines. Do you think the game is worth the candle?"

"It is not," I said emphatically.

"What makes my heart ache is the terrible effort a few women make to be somebody. They are transplanted to an artificial atmosphere where they absolutely do not dare be themselves. They have not money enough to keep up the style some congressional families do, then either they are unhappy or they begin to

splurge. Debt and worry follows,— a neglected home, — then heart burnings and jealousies. Perhaps there comes defeat for the husband after a term or two — and they go home —sadder — wiser. I have been looking on at this sort of thing for a good many years. You, even in your short experience, have seen something of it."

I nodded.

"Some day," she suggested, "glance over the official directory and notice how few of our representatives hail from big cities. Three-fourths of them live in little towns or villages you never heard of. That means they came from homes like yours in Wolverton or like ours in Bethel with the green country all around. City folks, born and bred among brick walls, can not feel as we do — about a home. How could they? I know what Jeff's homesickness is like. Leave him next session with Aunt Margaret."

Lem and I discussed it and in the morning told Jeff he should be left at Fruitlands in the fall. He was starting for school with his strap full of books. His face grew perfectly radiant. Then the flush died out. He came over to where I sat by the breakfast table, nearly knocking down the coffee pot in his clumsy haste.

"Dear old mother," he whispered while he hugged me like a bear, "you 're not going to mind — much?"

"No, Sonny," I said, "I 'm not going to mind — much. Next year 's the short session, you know." I heard him whistle as he ran down the street.

XXI

THE RETURN TO WOLVERTON

WHEN we went home after that first session, the attitude of old friends and neighbors in Wolverton would have been ridiculous if it had not been so genuine. Some of them stood aside, waiting for us to make first advances as if they feared we had changed. We were dressed differently. I had discovered that Miss Pickering's fashions were scarcely advanced enough for Washington. When I fancied clothes had something to do with the shyness among old friends, Densie and I donned last-year frocks for common wear. That helped in a way, still it did not bring everybody back to the old, good comradeship.

One day two weeks after we got home it seemed as if the whole countryside began to call. Occasionally there were twelve women in the house at once. Densie and I rose at daylight sometimes to get baking done. I remember that my company ate three cakes and a big crock full of cookies. The church crowd called and folks drove over from Cottonwood, whom I had n't seen for years. It kept up like one steady receiving day clear till Saturday night. I could n't understand it, because some of the folks

who were just as free and hearty as ever, had seemed offish and shy the first time I met them.

One of my last callers was Linnie Price. She and I were very fond of each other in the school-teaching days. She never married and is principal now over at Ruggles.

"Linnie," I said when we were left alone, "I want to ask you one question. Why did everybody wait till we were home two weeks before they came to see us?"

She flushed to the roots of her hair and shook her head.

"I don't know," she confessed.

"Linnie, that's a story. You do know. I don't mean that nobody came. Some folks we are n't so very well acquainted with called, but they made a ceremony of it, just as you and I used to act when we went calling on a new minister's wife, primped up and shy, as if butter would n't melt in our mouths. Think of Sarah Henderson and Anna Meyer acting that way with me when we grew up together and have been friends ever since! They were themselves yesterday."

Linnie sat down on the porch settle and began to laugh. I laughed with her.

"You've got to tell me before you go," I insisted. "I know there's something back of it all."

"There is, Pauline, and yet — it's so perfectly absurd."

"It must be absurd, the idea of Wolverton folks not knowing me after all these years."

"Well," began Linnie slowly, "I might as well confess how I felt, because I guess everybody else thought the same way as I did. It seemed somehow as if a dividing line was drawn when you became a congressman's wife."

"Linnie Price, this from you?" I cried reproachfully.

"Well, I could n't help it."

"You all came to bid me good-by, in the old, free, hearty way before we went East."

"Yes, but then you had n't been East. We folks out here don't know much about Washington except the splurge that we read about. There 's a Washington letter every week in the Sunday *Despatch.* We read in it how Lem and you had been at a White House reception and the Vice-President's dinner, and how you received at Senator Daggett's. You went to a lawn party the President's wife gave. It told who you had for dinner once; there was a cabinet officer and his wife for one and —"

"Linnie, you 've been laying all this up against us?"

"No," she cried eagerly, "not a bit like that. You can't think how proud we felt over you. Why — old Mrs. Whittlesey subscribed for a Washington paper and when you or Lem were mentioned in it, she loaned it all around town."

I sat down on the settle beside Linnie, half laughing, still there was a mist in my eyes.

"You dear girl, it was so absurd and yet I 'll always love to think of it, away off there in the East.

It will make life seem easier when I get lonesome for the sight of everybody here and the dear little home and —"

"You don't mean to say," asked Linnie with astonishment in her honest, gray eyes, "that you get lonesome — in Washington?"

"I do — I get so lonesome I can not put it into words. No, you don't understand. But there was Uncle Si! Did he come back and tell you we had changed?"

"I should n't think he did. He told us of your big house and what a fine time he had and of the famous people Lem knew,— why Pauline, Uncle Si thinks the sun rises and sets on you!"

"It 's the way I feel about him — but Linnie, you 've got to tell me what gave Wolverton such a change — of heart."

She colored again and laughed. "Well, it was Martha Sias."

"To be sure; I might have guessed Martha was back of it, the dear old gossip. Besides she was the first one to come. What did she do?"

"Martha was going past here Monday, driving down town with Otis McKinney, when you came running out at the gate wearing a blue gingham apron with your sleeves rolled up and a platter in your hand, calling O'Hara to stop. Then you bought meat of him."

"Why should n't I have bought meat of O'Hara?"

"For the life of me, I can't tell. I guess we folks thought it —"

"It was beneath the dignity of a congressman's wife to patronize a peddling butcher?"

Linnie nodded, but her face was one dimpling smile.

"Besides — last week when you hired George Eagle to mow the orchard, you asked him to sit down to the table with you, just as you had always done."

"Of course. Many a time I sat down in Washington with folks who were n't in our class. They may have been dressed in fashion-plate clothes, only God forgot to give them manners. I don't mean manners like eating soup from the side of a spoon, or knowing an ice cream fork from the one you spear an oyster with. That sort of thing 's outside polish. They had all that burnish on them, but not one had the kind, generous, honest heart George has. Sometimes they hurt you to the quick and never knew it. George Eagle ties a napkin round his neck and uses a knife as his father did. When he reads the *Gazette* he has to spell his way through it slowly, and his clothes are old and shabby. Only, he 's a gentleman to the core and the beautiful thing is, he does n't know it, because it 's there instinctively. George would n't dream of taking off his hat in an elevator if there was a woman in it, but do you suppose I 'd get the chance to carry an armful of wood or draw a pail of water if George is around? He would n't say a word to hurt a soul, to her face or behind her back, he 's clean-minded and hard-working. Oh, Linnie, I learned an awful lot in the East!"

She put her arms about me and kissed me just as she used to do when we were girls.

"Pauline," she stood looking at me for a minute, "I 'll never misunderstand you again, not even if Lem is made President."

Then we both laughed and said good-by. I watched her till she waved her hand while she closed the gate in the orchard.

I had to go in the house and do a big baking after Linnie went. A week of callers had thrown work behind. While I pared apples for pies and beat up cake batter, I did considerable thinking. I laughed aloud, even if I was all alone, over the idea of trading at the butcher's cart having set me straight with Wolverton and yet I understood. I believe I might have felt the same way myself.

Then I thought of Mrs. Daggett and the Crawfords and Senator Trent, with his splendid common-sense ideals. What they stood for had more straight Christianity in it than half the high-falutin preaching I had listened to from city pulpits. During our first winter in the East, a famous American writer came out with a statement that our nation is the rudest in the world. I heard people argue about it everywhere. The women especially said mean things about him and the ones it seemed to gall most were the folks who had the least manners. My idea has always been that a human being is born with manners, good or bad, as you are with a lovely face or a plain one. The most fashionable boarding-school in the country can't furnish manners to a girl, if she does not have them in her. If they make a bluff at doing it, the thing is not manners — it is veneer.

When Densie was a child, Anna Swisher was coming to wash for me one morning. She asked leave to bring her little girl along, because she had nobody to leave her with. I told Densie to get out her dolls because she was to have a playmate.

"Why don't you bring out Lady Jane," I asked, when I found the old shabby dolls set around on the hall floor. Lady Jane was a lovely new doll Aunt Margaret had given her at Christmas.

Densie pulled me out to the kitchen, shut the door and whispered, "Please, Mother, don't say anything about Lady Jane — before Lucy. She has nothing but an awfully poor, old doll — and she thinks it's lovely. I brought out all my old ones. She might go home feeling bad if she saw Lady Jane."

Perhaps because of this instinctive feeling for a hurt to anybody else Densie feels and resents the rudeness she met sometimes in Washington, from girls of her own age. During the winter she took a few lessons in jewel work at an arts and crafts school. One day she came home furiously angry.

"Did you know, Mother, we have the granddaughter of a President in our class and she is the rudest girl in the school."

"Being a President's granddaughter is the merest accident, dear."

"Yes, I know, still you would expect her to have manners. To-day, I waited ten minutes for her to finish working with a saw. When she laid it down, I asked her for it — quite politely. She threw it at me."

"Threw it!"

"Yes, it fell on the floor, I had to pick it up. She treats everybody as rudely as she does me except a few girls who are in her set. She orders our teacher about as if he were a servant — nobody with manners would talk to a servant as she does. Yesterday, an old lady who takes lessons, was standing beside her. She looked up and said, 'Get out of my light.' A few minutes later she turned to me and said, 'Shut the door — there 's an awful draft.'"

"What did you do?" I asked.

"I acted as if I had not heard her. One elderly woman in the class called her down to-day and yet I don't believe she understands she has no manners."

I went to a suffragist meeting one afternoon in Washington where women contradicted each other and were absolutely rude. When one speaker got up she threw a bombshell into the crowd. "If I believed in suffrage, which I don't," she said, "because of many reasons, the scenes I have witnessed here to-day make me more than ever an anti-suffragist. Women are not qualified to cast a vote until they acquire good manners. America has still much to learn from the old nations of the world."

One afternoon I understood what she meant by "the old nations of the world." I went to a tea in a lovely home where a charming gentlewoman welcomed her guests. The chatter hushed for a moment when Madame Chang, the wife of the Chinese minister entered with her young daughters. I had never seen the women from the Chinese embassy before.

The first thing I noticed, even before the strange Oriental garb, was their exquisite manners. They shook hands in a quiet, gentle way and smiled, there was no gush or chatter or explosion of meaningless nothings. They had not acquired that quick, curious, summing-up glance I have grown accustomed to meet from so many women; a glance which makes me feel as if I was being appraised, and instantly catalogued. It was odd to contrast their faces with the others beside them. Madame Chang was probably older than many of the women in the room. There was not a thread of gray in the black hair, which was brushed flat about her head like a tight-fitting silk cap. Her face was as smooth and tranquil and her eyes as clear and bright as her daughter's. In youthful faces about her, were weary lines, which comes from constant smiling, little worries, late hours, petty jealousies and all the small carping cares of a society woman's life.

While I stood beside the tea table our hostess came to beg a girl near me to sing. She had quiet, shy manners and hesitated.

"If you will forgive me, I would rather not," she begged, "it is so hard to sing at a tea, while people talk or run in and out."

"I understand and would not urge you," explained the hostess, "only Madame Chang has heard about you and she wishes one song."

The girl set her cup down instantly.

"I will try to please Madame Chang, she is charming."

The Chinese lady and her daughters sat in a little

alcove waiting. Women, still nibbling at a cake or sipping a cup of tea, crowded in from the dining-room to listen. There was one hushed moment as the girl began to sing a sweet old ballad. Before she finished the first verse the chatter began again in a subdued whisper, mingled with soft laughter and the rustle of silky gowns. A few women besides the hostess sat in perfect silence. The ladies from the Chinese embassy listened, still as figures in a tableau, with their eyes turned steadily upon the young singer. Once the girl flushed and hesitated at an interrupting buzz of talk, louder than the rest. When she stopped muffled applause came from gloved hands and a shower of compliments. Women were crowding about to ask for one more song. The girl shook her head.

Madame Chang and her daughter paused to shake hands and thank her — in their beautifully, quiet way. I saw the girl look down at the Chinese lady gratefully.

"Thank you," she said; "I will be pleased and honored to sing for you some day at your home."

A few women might have learned that afternoon, if they could have realized they stood in need of teaching, that we *can* learn something from the older nations of the world!

XXII

THE SUFFRAGE SITUATION

DURING Lemuel's second campaign I was drawn personally into a fight. It taught me a lesson I never forgot. One day a reporter came to ask for an interview. Lem had always counseled me to be careful when I talked for a newspaper, so before I saw the woman I 'phoned to him.

"Don't get into deep water, Polly," he advised, "or criticize anybody. I guess you can give her a pretty good interview and still keep away from shoals. I 'll trust you."

I talked with the reporter for an hour. She was a bright, interesting woman with keen gray eyes. I felt sometimes as if she were reading my very thoughts. She tried to switch me on to subjects I knew Lem would not want discussed. She talked of politics as they were in the West, of the Insurgent movement and of Washington society. One congressional woman had said a few weeks before in a reckless way she has that "the fashionable set in Washington had apple-float where there ought to be gray matter." It went the round of the papers and of course it made talk. The reporter asked if I held the same opinion. I told her I did not know a single

soul in the gay set; I had never come nearer than brushing against them at some social affair.

We talked about the days when I taught school, we discussed housekeeping, the education of children, the duties of a congressman's wife, affairs at the Congressional Club and the contrast between life in the East and West.

While I stood at the door bidding her good-by, she turned quickly and asked, "Are you a suffragist, Mrs. Shipe?"

"Mercy, no," I cried. "I would n't accept a vote if it were offered me on a gold salver."

"The question does not interest you?"

"No, I have more rights now than I know what to do with. Besides my husband is equal to looking after the politics for this family. When my boys grow up they can take a hand at it."

I found she was a married woman with boys of her own. She felt as I did about anti-suffrage, only she was partizan to a degree. I pulled out of the discussion and let her talk; she did it well, for she knew more about the question than I did. Once or twice I acceded to her opinions.

I gave the interview no more thought till Sunday morning. When Lem unfolded the papers at the breakfast table, he rose and came round to where I sat pointing at a sheet where my portrait flared out like a dull gray smudge. Over it in big letters I read:

MRS. LEMUEL SHIPE

Wife of a Western Member of Congress Is a Red-Hot Anti-Suffragist

Lemuel's face was knotted into an anxious frown.

"Good Lord, Polly," he cried, "you could n't have got hold of any subject that would have bothered me as this will. If you had discussed the tariff or conservation, or any old thing, I would n't have cared. A woman's views on such subjects don't count for a red cent, but — suffrage!"

"I did n't say anything worth quoting, Lemuel; indeed I did n't. Let me see it."

I took the paper and he stood reading over my shoulder. When I looked up his brow wrinkled and he was pulling his mustache as he does when he is terribly worried.

"Lem, I tell you, I never said anything like this. It is the woman's own views. Here and there she puts it into the very words she used. Anyway I don't know enough about suffrage to make such statements as these. She 's got to retract it."

"That 's no use," he said helplessly. Then he began that frantic tramp of his about the room which always gets on my nerves.

"A denial would n't count for shucks. Muldoon of Turtle Creek is getting his machinery ready to run against me for the nomination and he 's coming out strong for woman suffrage. A certain element in our

district have been hollering for it like maniacs. This is enough to kill me — dead."

"Lem," I cried miserably, "when I 'phoned, why did n't you tell me about this. I could have refused to say a word about it. She was wild to discuss local option, I would n't talk of that. Why did n't you steer me off suffrage?"

"A man was waiting to see me about something quite important when you called. I simply did n't think."

"The people in the second district may not see it."

"No such luck," growled Lem. "Muldoon is simply waiting to find the best place to knife me. His wife is a wild-eyed suffragist. Her money is back of his campaign. Her father, old Tim Flatherty, runs the county paper. He 'll put out an extra edition with this interview of yours."

Lemuel knew what he was talking about. The words I had never spoken were not only spread in big type over the front page of the Turtle Creek *Herald* but quoted and commented on all through the State. Many a time I wished I might creep into a cave in the mountains to get away from publicity. I began to have an avalanche of mail. I was blackguarded within an inch of my life one day and invited by the Anti-suffrage League to go on the stump. Besides I was besieged by interviewers. When I refused point-blank to say another word on the subject, the Turtle Creek *Herald* screamed "'Fraid Cat."

The session dragged on till the middle of summer.

It was late before we started for home. Lem had been working harder than he ever did in his life. He suffered terribly from the heat, for there is not such a breathless spot in Washington as the floor of the House on a hot day. Then he was worrying himself half sick over the way the campaign was going at home. Harlan Brett, who looked after Lem's affairs, said things could not be worse.

When we arrived in Wolverton, Lemuel had troubles to burn. Many of them dealt with such intricate questions that I gave up trying to understand. Decker had pulled out of the race, his old record was against him. Still one man in the field was nothing in the world but a Decker marionette with Decker's money twitching him about. The ex-congressman was the sort of politician who stood ready to spend any amount of cash if he once got his heart set on a thing.

There were three men in the field, Chris Sprague of Avery had consented to run on an independent ticket. He was a good, solid, honest citizen whom people liked and respected. Lem knew he was up against a big fight, even with the advantage of having served one term. His handicap was anti-suffrage. He did not believe in woman suffrage and would not stand for it. Decker's man as well as Muldoon came out for suffrage and half the women I had known as quiet, contented wives and mothers seemed snorting with eagerness to rush into the fight.

Sometimes I scarcely saw my husband for weeks. He was off, traveling about the district, occasionally on horseback for days at a time because miles of

wilderness in our state are not traversed by railroads. He was trying not to miss a single constituent and he stopped at places he had never bothered with before. Occasionally he came home for a day's rest, then he was the most bedraggled object I ever saw, going unshaved for days at a time, seldom stopping to get a square meal and mud spattered to the back of the neck.

One Saturday afternoon, he staggered in so thoroughly worn out that I looked at him in terror. He went straight to bed and I stayed by him all night wrapping his throat in hot compresses for his voice had worn down to a husky whisper. Sunday morning he could do nothing but shake or nod his head when I asked a question. Brett came to talk over the campaign and Lemuel answered like a dumb man, writing what he wanted to say on a slip of paper.

"Can't a doctor do anything?" I asked anxiously of Brett.

"Nothing. We went to a specialist last week. He says Lem's vocal cords are tied up in a knot. The only thing to do is to keep him silent. Even when his voice comes back he 's got to use it mighty careful."

While he spoke we stood on the porch and I was staring vacantly at a clump of hollyhocks, which were so heavy with blossoms they hung their heads over the fence. I remember thinking absently they ought to be staked right away. Brett clenched his fist and began to beat with it nervously into the hollow of his other hand.

"Is the situation critical?" I asked.

"Things are going hell bent — excuse me, Mrs. Shipe." The big man forced a kindly smile. "If Senator Trent were here he would help, only he 's off in some out-of-the-way place among the mountains and I hate to send for him. He 's played out; 'fairly shot to pieces' so a man told me yesterday."

"What 's the chief trouble?"

Brett did not answer for a moment. "Well, if you want to know, it 's those blamed suffragists. I 'd like to see the last one of them in — Tophet."

"And — it was — all my — fault," I whispered.

"Not wholly; you forced their hands; they would have put it up to Lem sooner or later."

"No, I did all the mischief and I can't unsnarl it."

"Sit down a minute, Mrs. Shipe, I want to talk to you." He pushed a rocker toward me. I dropped into it, for I was dead tired.

"Lemuel can't hear us talk out here?" he asked in a low voice.

"No,— besides I guess he is sound asleep. He can hardly keep his eyes open."

"There 's something you can do — to help," said Brett suddenly.

"I." I rose to my feet. "Tell me what it is!"

"You never spoke in public?" he asked.

"No," I shrank away in sudden terror. "Oh, Mr. Brett, I can't do that."

"No, you are n't that sort," he answered quietly. "I had hardly hoped you could."

"What did you want me to do?"

"It 's this way. Mrs. Muldoon came out last night with a challenge for you to meet her in a debate on the suffrage question."

"Oh," I cried, "Oh, I could never do that, never!"

"No, I realize now it was crazy to think of it. My wife could n't. I doubt whether I would let her if she was willing to. You and she are something alike."

"Thank you." I felt grateful. I did not know Mrs. Brett very well but everybody likes her. She is a quiet, refined woman with gentle manners.

"No, it is n't even to be thought of." Brett jumped to his feet. "I 've got to hit on some other scheme, only for the life of me I can't think of one — now."

"Please sit down, Mr. Brett, and tell me about it. I want to understand the situation. If there is anything I can do, I 'll do it. You know I brought on the trouble."

"Get that out of your head at once," he said kindly. "The question was bound to come to the front sooner or later. Other congressmen are facing it through the West. Four States have woman suffrage now. Probably it is only a matter of time when we will be forced to it. I swear, though, I hate to see it come; it would unbalance the whole scheme of things."

"Tell me what I should have to do."

"Did you ever join in a debate at school?"

"Why, yes."

"Well, it 's about the same thing. Only you stand against one opponent and your audience is made up of men and women instead of schoolmates. A good

many of them were your schoolmates, though, I reckon."

"Then what?"

"Simply tell why you don't approve of woman suffrage."

"And the other woman tells why she does?"

"Exactly. Have you ever seen Mrs. Muldoon?"

"No."

"She 's a big, coarse, common bruiser of a woman. She 's a suffragist for exactly the same reason thousands of women are; it 's the only thing on earth that gives them a chance to show up before the public. She has a certain following, men as well as women; they 're the sort of human truck that would follow a brass band. The better class despise her. Just the same, she is helping her husband, queer as it may seem."

"She would hammer me to pieces."

"I 'll see to it that she does n't hammer you physically. I don't know just what sort of a job you could make of it." Brett looked thoughtful. "What I had figured on was the contrast between you two women. You stand for the type we want our mothers and sisters and wives to be, she 's the type that even a fairly courteous man feels like throttling. When she can get an audience, she harangues people on a street corner."

"Could I say exactly what I wish?"

"You are n't going to do it?"

"I 'm going to try. Has she set a date?"

"Next Thursday. It leaves you no time to pre-

pare, still I 'll do every blessed thing I can. Supposing I bring you a bunch of anti-suffrage literature to-morrow!"

"Please don't. I would rather not see it. Simply let me talk my own way."

He consented. He also agreed with me that it was best Lemuel should know nothing about the debate. We agreed to carry out the doctor's orders rigidly; he was to be kept perfectly still, reading no papers and seeing no visitors.

Once years ago, during an operation, I was put under an anesthetic. When I mounted the platform of the town hall I felt as I did while I dreamed away into unconsciousness on the operating table and I had a horrible conviction that I was losing my mind. Densie stayed by me till the last minute. She had even dressed me, for I felt incapable of doing anything for myself. I remember she hooked me into a black gown and put a scrap of vivid red geranium at my belt.

"What is that for?" I asked.

"To brighten you up, little Mudder," she said. "You look like a ghost."

It was hot on the platform and I looked down on a wide sea of faces. I knew Densie and Jeff were there with the Bretts in a front row but I could not find them. I did not seem able to single out one human face from the dense blur. Mr. Brett led me on the platform and I think I shook hands with the woman I was to meet in debate. When I looked up at her, I wondered why a creature so huge and uncomely as

she was should dress in brilliant pink, especially when her hair was red. She smiled at me in a contemptuous fashion — then she led off with the debate.

I doubt if I heard one word she said. I watched her ramp up and down, gesticulating wildly, then stopping to pound the table. Occasionally the house broke into a shout of applause or a roar of laughter. That frightened me, I felt people were lining up with her. At last she stopped and wiped the perspiration from her red-hot face.

Mr. Brett touched me on the arm.

"Have n't you any notes?" he asked.

When I said "No," he looked worried and as if he pitied me. Suddenly the mist seemed to clear out of my brain and I saw individual faces down in front, some of them old friends who smiled at me encouragingly. Mr. Brett talked for a few minutes, I think he was giving me a chance to pull my wits together. I heard him speak of an audience made up of old friends, old pupils and old schoolmates.

That cheered me. I saw a few people in the front row who would never go back on me. Then came an outburst of applause, when it died down, I began to speak.

All the time I had been feeling there was something back in my mind I wanted to say. When I got to my feet it was as easy to say as if I had been talking to children in the little red school at the Crossroads.

I began to speak of the days when our country was a vast, untrodden wilderness. I told the story of our ancestors, beginning with the day when they set

foot on the shore of a lonely bay. I hesitated there. Somehow I could not find words to make it sufficiently vivid, then back to my memory verses came leaping which I had not thought of since I learned them in childhood. Mrs. Hemans' poem pictured the scene as I could never do it:

The breaking waves dashed high
  On a stern and rockbound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky,
  Their giant branches tossed.

And the heavy night hung dark
  The hills and waters o'er
When a band of exiles moored their bark
  On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes
  They, the true-hearted, came,
Not with the roll of the stirring drums
  And the trumpet that sings of fame.

Not as the flying come,
  In silence and in fear,
They shook the depths of the forest gloom
  With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
  And the stars heard and the sea.
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
  To the anthem of the free.

The ocean eagle soared
  From his nest by the white waves' foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roared —
  This was their welcome home.

There were men with hoary hair
  Amidst that pilgrim band;
Why had they come to wither there
  Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
  Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
  And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
  Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
  They sought a faith's pure shrine.

Aye, call it holy ground,
  The soil where first they trod,
They have left unstained what there they found —
  Freedom to worship God.

I was never strong on elocution and yet a moment of wild applause followed that last verse. I think my audience saw, as I did, the little company of ocean wayfarers, the fathers of American pioneers.

"Some of you here," I went on, "pride yourselves on descent from that band of Pilgrim fathers. Proud you may well be, for royal blood is ignoble beside it."

Then I described the slow building of a new government in a lonely, wild country, where between affairs of state men stopped to fight off the Indians and wring a living from an inhospitable soil. The women did their part bravely, though it was different toil; making a home as comfortable as a home could be in the wilderness and rearing their children to be good, useful, brave men and women.

It was easy to follow a later generation as they pushed their way through the forests of the Far West. I had listened to such stories in childhood on many a winter night. It was a record of stern self-denial, of hard toil, with woman ever at the helm as the helper, the comforter, the home-maker, the gentle mother and faithful wife. Her duties were essential and honorable, as hewing trees or becoming a pillar of the young Government.

I knew my audience intimately, Mrs. Muldoon did not. Her ancestors had left Ireland scarcely a generation ago. Hundreds who listened to me held in beloved memory such women as my mother and grandmother, simple, kind, gentlewomen who esteemed it their highest duty to look well to the comfort and happiness of a home, content that the husband should bear the brunt of earning bread and settling statehood questions which they could not understand.

Then, I appealed to the common sense of the women I knew, to the fact that their lives were already well filled. I told the story of a campaign as I had seen it; the cruelty of newspaper lies which spared neither wife nor child, of false motives laid to a man's charge,

of the sickness for home when home is at the other side of a continent, of nights when the steady gleam of a beacon over the Capitol dome tells of men working far longer than a union laborer. I spoke of Lemuel lying at home voiceless and so benumbed by fatigue that he had slept for days together, of weeks of travel through desert regions which were strange even to us.

"You want the ballot," I said. "Do you realize what responsibility the vote brings with it,— not only duties but new ambitions outside a woman's sphere, perhaps the ambition to go to Congress yourself? Can you face the battle a man does before he achieves the place? If you go out into such a combat, what about your home, your children, all that a woman holds near and dear? Remember — equal rights mean equal hardships, equal obligations!"

When I stopped speaking there was silence. I grew chill for a moment with fear. Mrs. Muldoon's tirade had closed amid a yelp of wild enthusiasm. Suddenly the silence ended, people were jumping to their feet, climbing over benches, calling my name and Lem's. A boy's shrill voice somewhere in the gallery, shouted, "What 's the matter with Pauline Shipe?"

"She 's all right," cried a voice from the floor.

"Who 's all right?"

"Pauline Shipe, she 's all right."

I turned aside, my eyes so blurred with tears I could not see a single face near me. Somebody clasped me tight in his arms and I sobbed out on Jeff's shoulder all the pent-up anxiety, the long siege of

worry, fear and trouble. The boy's voice was husky while he whispered:

"Great Scott, I 'm proud of you, dear little Mudder, prouder than I ever was of Dad. You 're a dead game sport and you beat old Muldoon to a standstill. They 're carrying her remains out now."

I laughed. Hands were groping for mine, so many that I could not clasp them all. I looked into dear smiling faces by the hundred. Aunt Margaret was there, Lawyer Marshall, George Eagle, Brett, radiant as the rising sun, the Moreheads, Nancy Dodd, good Doctor Lambert and our gentle old minister.

"I congratulate you, Pauline, with all my heart," he said. "Sheer common sense wins every time. The Lord inspired you and woman's suffrage has had its death blow in Wolverton, I believe."

Lem's nomination went through without a hitch. On election day he carried the second district by four thousand, seven hundred and sixty-eight votes.

XXIII

AN OLD HISTORIAN

LEMUEL'S secretary was taken sick soon after we came East, so for several days I went to the House and helped to write letters or straighten out things which had been piling up while he was rushed with other work. I began by dictating letters. It seemed at first as if I could never reel off decent English to a girl, who sat with her pencil and eyes both waiting for me, but it grew easier each day. There were letters from folks in the district, whom I knew and I put in a few friendly words from both of us. Lem joked about engaging me as his secretary; he said the touch of personal interest told wonderfully in letters that went home.

After the stenographer left one day we were preparing to go downstairs for lunch when the door was slowly pushed open and an old man came in. His hair was long. It waved up at the ends and was silky white as a child's is silky yellow. He had large blue eyes and wore heavy glasses. His clothes and hat were shabby and old-fashioned. He had an uncommonly refined, gentle face and there was a pathos about his smile that went to my heart.

Lem went swiftly across the room and led the old man to a chair, then introduced him. He rose, glanc-

ing about as if he were searching for me, and I knew that he was nearly blind.

"You will vote me an intolerable nuisance, Mr. Shipe," he said apologetically. "It is only two weeks ago since I was here last. But you know I am hoping, all the time, for good news."

"That 's the way to feel, Mr. Glen," said Lemuel cheerfully. "You 're a man after my own heart; nothing helps in life like keeping up courage."

"Courage has carried me over many a hard place." There was a hopeful tone in the old man's voice. "Any news about my book, sir?"

"Not yet. I am expecting word any day. I have laid proposals about it before new people, I sent them a batch of extracts, the best things and most interesting stories I could find in your manuscript. My secretary copied a hundred pages or so which gave some idea of its quality. I want one of the papers in our State to publish part of it serially. If that could be done, it means splendid advertising for the work as well as a fair price. It might bring the book before some one who would be willing to undertake its publication."

I watched the old man while Lemuel spoke. A glow of warmth came into his pale face. He rose to his feet and groped about with outstretched hands to the desk where my husband sat.

"Mr. Shipe," his voice was shaking with emotion, "you offer me a larger share of hope than has come to me in thirty years,— in thirty years, sir! When I wrote the last word of my history, I was forty-five

— I thought then I was an old man. I have lived to know what old age means. All those years I have been hoping, constantly hoping. I felt that a lifetime of toil must have its reward — some day. That history, sir, the germ of which was growing in my mind from boyhood, I began when I was thirty."

"It is fine to see such spirit and energy as yours," said Lem heartily.

"I am going home with fresh courage, sir. I feel that in your capable hands my work at last is sure of success. Five congressmen have come and gone from your district since my history was completed. I received from none of them such gentle consideration and courtesy as I have from you. I appealed to Mr. Decker once; he was a man with neither appreciation nor breeding."

We invited the old man to lunch with us. He declined with gentle haughtiness. Lemuel won him over by the assurance that I would enjoy hearing his reminiscences of our State in its early days. As I watched him eat, I realized that a good square meal was not an every-day incident for him. Lem crossed the park to put him on the car. When he returned he told me Mr. Glen's story.

"Polly," he said, "there 's a case which makes the representative's job no sinecure. Look."

From a drawer he lifted a parcel of manuscript so thick it made a high pile on the desk. I glanced through the sheets. It was beautifully written, in a neat, careful hand but the ragged yellow pages told of travel.

"For thirty years it has been wandering about America in search of a publisher." Lem touched it pitifully. "It represents, as the old man said, a lifetime of research and toil."

"What is it?" I asked.

"A history of our State."

"Is it worth while?"

"Yes,— it is worth while," answered Lem thoughtfully. "It is accurate, painstaking, well-told, and he goes back, oh — I guess, he goes back — to the mound builders."

"Why did n't it sell?"

"That 's a hard question to answer, Polly. There are poorer histories in existence, some of them are utter rot, and chock full of errors,— still they have made a pile of money. All the time poor old Glen was up against the problem of having no capital. The publication would have cost at least five thousand dollars."

"Is there hope for it now?"

"A most forlorn hope, but I can't tell the old man that. I am pulling every wire I can to help him. Only, you see, it is not up-to-date, and it was written with the outlook wholly upon the past. Thirty years ago, no one could anticipate the marvelous growth of the West."

"It is pathetic."

"That 's what it is — just pathetic. Before we came to Washington a friend of Glen's called to see me. He asked me to treat the old man kindly, even if nothing material could be done. The first time Glen

called on Decker he threw him out neck and crop."

"Decker's a brute."

"I may get papers here and there through the State to print extracts from his history, but they will pay practically nothing for the stuff. I have written to a score of men, who know Glen, asking them in a quiet way to get together a fund for the old man; then we will let him imagine it is coming from his book. I offered to start it with a hundred dollars. I guess we can spare that."

"Of course we can."

"It seems like a record of wasted years," Lemuel sighed as he laid the worn manuscript back in the drawer, "not idly wasted, because it took the earnest thought and loftiest ambition of a lifetime. The pitiful knowledge of wasted endeavor comes to every man here. Thousands of such failures, not dishonest, contemptible failures, but efforts as worthy as Glen's, drift constantly in and out under this roof. Some of them come to my door, but those I see are nothing, absolutely nothing, in comparison to the multitude which surge in upon older, abler men than I am. The outside world knows little about a congressman's life. The other day a man from home said: 'I guess, Shipe, life for you is all hot birds now and cold champagne.' That was his idea of lordly fare. He did n't know what he was talking about. No man does till he has held down the job himself."

XXIV

AT CHEEVER'S

THE children and their father sprang a plot on me early in January. I had noticed them laugh and whisper behind doors, then break away in the guilty fashion people do at Christmas time. I wondered what was afoot, but promptly forgot it till one morning at breakfast when I found an envelope on my plate. It was an invitation from Lemuel to go on a silver-wedding journey. Then I remembered that on Saturday we had been married twenty-two years.

"We cannot go on a silver-wedding journey," I objected, "for three years yet."

"In three years," cried Lemuel with a laugh, "we 'll take another one."

So we went to New York where neither of us had ever been before. Densie insisted that she could keep house, and we must stay for ten days at least.

"Dear little Mudder, it ought to be ten weeks instead of ten days," she whispered as she kissed me good-by. "To think of you and father never having had a honeymoon, why it is disgraceful! Only before two weeks were over you would feel like an exile and come sneaking home some night to wake us all up. Oh, I know you!"

Although I had the giddiest time any old silver

honeymooner ever knew, I began before the week was out to count the hours of a return journey. We saw everything the great city offers to a sightseer. We drove through the country and parks. Lem went shopping with me. I had never dreamed he could be enticed into a department store, but he followed me around with the steadfast air of doing his duty to the last ditch. We saw good plays and poor ones, we dined in palaces and in Bohemian cellars, we listened to music more wonderful than anything I ever dreamed of, we wandered among pictures which took us to strange, enchanted lands.

One night, after leaving the theater, we were following the crowd, when we came to a standstill. Hundreds thronged in at a door where an electric sign invited us with its white dazzle.

"Let 's see what sort of a place this is?" suggested Lem.

It was as spacious as the music hall where we had listened to Sembrich. An orchestra filled a balcony. Below were scattered hundreds of tables, where a throng sat eating and drinking. When the players paused, a woman stepped to the front. She was one of the most beautiful creatures I have ever seen. Her voice filled the great space like the soft notes of an organ. Afterwards the orchestra played something in which I could distinguish a storm in the mountains, the wind sighing through the pine trees, a blacksmith making music on his anvil — then suddenly, came dawn and the singing of birds.

Scattered through the program were ragtime tunes

or other things, lilting, inconsequential strains which sounded like laughter, still they were filled with a harmony that set people to humming, to clinking their glasses or tapping their feet. Often hundreds of voices broke into a chorus of song.

The crowd was as strange as the music. There were handsome, high-bred men and others who were common or repulsively ugly. Nearly every woman was beautiful. Some were young, almost childishly young, others were self-possessed, haughty or bold. I saw lips which had grown weary from smiling and eyes that were tired of life. Nowhere, even at the most magnificent function in Washington, had I seen such clothes, gowns of filmy stuff, of glowing velvet or silk which shimmered and gleamed. Jewels blazed on bare necks and feathers drooped from wonderful hats. But often the glimmer of a thousand lights fell pitilessly on painted faces and on masses of dead, dyed hair.

It was long after midnight but the music and singing grew louder with the chorus of clinking glasses, babbling voices and laughter. The woman came out again, to sing a song which had the patter of high-heeled slippers in it and the swagger of an opera chorus. The words were frivolous but the multitude shouted its approval.

She returned to bow but the people clamored for an encore. She nodded to the leader of the orchestra. Perfect silence followed a bar of slow, stately music in which a score of instruments joined. Men and women laid down their glasses, and looked at each

other in bewilderment. The laughter, the humming and the smiles ceased — the singer moved to the edge of the platform, then she began.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
    Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross,
    That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Before she reached the third line, men and women had risen to their feet. Here and there heads were bowed as if in church. I stood with the fingers over my eyes to shut out the glittering scene, for I was thousands of miles away. The old hymn had carried me home to the shabby, little Baptist church in Wolverton, where the doors were open to let a soft, warm spring wind sweep through the aisles. Then — I was at mother's funeral, I could see the choir on the stair-landing at home — they were singing the hymn mother loved beyond all others. That day it comforted me strangely. I remembered once how the children in Sunday school sang, " Nearer, my God, to Thee " with a certain gaiety that the superintendent reproved. I wondered if he was not wrong, why should it always be sung slowly and solemnly? To my memory came the pause in a nation's affairs while a martyred President lay at the point of death, breathing with his last whisper, " Nearer, My God, to Thee."

The singer bowed and disappeared in a perfect hush. No encore followed the hymn.

"Lem," I whispered, "let us go home."

Women with painted cheeks glanced up while we passed through the crowded hall, but the sparkle had gone out of their eyes. At a table near the door a young girl sat with her face between her hands. She was sobbing huskily. A brimming glass of champagne stood beside her elbow. A man stared at her curiously, then he dropped a half-smoked cigar on the table and laid his hand upon her arm.

A clock was striking two when we entered the hotel.

"What sort of a place is Cheever's?" asked Lemuel when he called for our key.

The clerk hesitated and glanced at me.

"It 's the gayest dive in the city. There are n't many ladies there like your wife — except when — as you do — they 're from out of town and drop in without knowing where they are."

"Lem," I said while we waited for the elevator, "that girl by the door — the one who was crying — I don't believe she was as old as Densie."

XXV

INAUGURATION COMPANY

IF you wish to locate lost relatives or friends you have not heard of for years and incidentally learn something of human nature, become a householder in Washington before Inauguration. It does not matter what President is being inaugurated — any inauguration will do.

That Christmas brought Lem and me more presents than we had ever received in our lives at once. Few of them were things we could use. Judge Thynne's wife sent me a silver bouquet-holder. I never acquired the habit of carrying a bouquet around, I enjoy flowers better in a vase, and if I did, I would not wear it larruping at my side by a chain. Mrs. Thynne was one of the Wolverton folks who never knew we existed till after Lem's election. As for letters and postals they came in bunches wishing us the blessedest sort of a Christmas.

"What on earth made all of these people remember us?" I asked Lem perplexedly. "Look at this absurd beaded collar with love from Mrs. Stephen Peters. I never met Mrs. Peters more than twice in my life."

Lem glanced up from a letter he was reading and laughed.

"Polly, you 've got to live and learn. Don't you

know that the Fourth of March is Inauguration Day?"

"Yes, but what has that to do with it?"

"Letters will string along, from now on, saying how eager folks are to see us, they think of taking a little trip East during the early spring, and had planned to stop off for a few days in Washington. They 'll end up by asking you to recommend a good hotel, which is n't the top notch on prices."

"And then?"

"Why — then," explained Lem cheerfully, "it 's up to you to write a real cordial note saying we will be tickled to death to have them and their children, and their cousins and aunts and grandmothers come on and stay with us, through Inauguration."

"Nonsense, Lemuel, there are people here who would never dream of coming East. Here 's Mrs. Henry May for instance."

"Wait!" Lem wagged his head wisely.

"Old Mrs. May would n't come and visit us," cried Densie; "why she holds her nose higher than anybody in Wolverton."

"Wait," advised Lem again.

He was right. My "thank you" notes had hardly been received when people answered them with long, friendly letters. Lemuel got more of them than I did. He used to pull them out of his pocket night after night and read to me. There were three classes of writers; the first came boldly to the front, asking if they might visit us at Inauguration time, the second class asked for information about hotels and boarding-houses, the third, they riled me worse than any

of them, told of their longing to come East for Inauguration only they scarcely dared — the papers said rooms and board could not be obtained in Washington, on March 4th, for love or money.

One Sunday afternoon while I was writing to Margaret I lifted a bunch of letters from my desk and handed them to Lemuel.

"You 'll have to tell me what to do about these," I said. "I have n't answered one of them. We can't accommodate them all, unless we rent a hotel. If there was one old friend amongst them — one who had done us a kindly turn when we needed friends, or a soul I cared for — I 'd be willing to double up any-which-way; but think of, well — of the Sternbergers, for instance, asking to visit us."

"Yes," Lem scowled, "they 've got money enough to throw at the birds — and then have some left."

"What shall I say?"

"You 'll have to tell them as I did, that we 'll do anything in reason. I can get a few seats for the parade, and take a bunch of folks over to the exercises at the House. I suppose you can have some of them up for dinner, only, dog-eared together as we are now in a five-room flat, we can't take them in for steady eating and sleeping, that 's all there is about it."

"Lem, how can people do such things?"

"Don't ask me. Only we 're better off than most of the congressmen, because we 're so far from home. In self-defense, Burns of Virginia is renting his apartment for a week and taking his family off for a holiday till Inauguration is past. He says last time it

cost him half a year's salary to look after folks from his district. He 's a poor man and can't afford it. One Pennsylvania man has a bunch of exceedingly polite regrets already written; he 's sending them out now, by the dozen."

"It 's an imposition."

"I know it, Polly, only — what 's going to be done about it? I 've got one call for an invitation in my pocket now, that has made me do a lot of thinking."

"Who is it?"

"Hartley Allen with his wife and daughters."

"Lemuel Shipe!" I brought my fist down on a stamp I was putting on an envelope. "That beats Harriet Webb out and out. There was only one of her, we had a house then, and she did not push us into a corner."

"I simply don't know what to do. Allen wired me from Chicago he 's been trying to find hotel accommodations here. There is n't a thing to be got. Here 's his message."

I read it in silent rage. The last line of it ran: "What about you folks taking us in?"

"I think, Lem, they are taking us in."

"To be sure they are, only what am I to do?"

"What have you done?"

"I wired him that we are jammed into a five-room apartment but that I would talk it over with you, and let him know, to-night."

"Are we under any obligation to Hartley Allen?"

"Not yet."

"Then we are to be?"

"It 's like this, Pauline. Brett is threatened with a breakdown; he looks like a big, husky fellow, but there's a nail loose in him somewhere. His doctor has ordered him to knock off work and go away for a year or so. It means finding the best man to manage my campaign next year, and there 's nobody better in sight than Hartley Allen. He 's cautious, he 's got no end of political ability, but I 'm not dead sure of his friendship. This is a chance to clinch him."

"Oh, I hate this being nice to people, whether we like them or not, for just what we 're going to get out of it."

"It 's part of the political game."

I smiled. It does not take a congressman's wife long to see how scenery is worked behind the curtain on the political stage.

Old Georgie came to help me for a week, and on March 3rd we were ready for company. We had only two bedrooms; we gave them up to our guests. I contrived a bed for Bob on the pantry shelf. Densie and Lem and I had cots in the hall and sitting-room. The rent of a cot for two nights cost as much as if a room had gone with it. The Allens were still in the West; we expected them in Wednesday night on the eight o'clock train.

That year March came frolicking in like a jaunty little lamb, wreathed in blossoms and cheerful as sunshine. The trees were beginning to bud, crocuses perked their heads up through the grass and the pale gold of forsythia blossoms came bursting from bare branches.

Once in four years Washington does not wait for Easter to launch the spring fashions. Everybody blooms out in new clothes for Inauguration and Christmas is hardly past when the shops grow gay as gardens. Densie and I got new frocks and hats. We anticipated Inauguration more than anything that had happened in Washington. A night or two before the 4th we sauntered through Pennsylvania avenue to see the decorations. It looked like fairyland with its white pillars and arches, gay bunting, its flags and long, trailing wreaths of green stuff. I wondered sometimes, while we were swept along by a crowd, where everybody would sleep that night. The city did not seem to me big enough to hold such a multitude.

The weather man promised blue skies and sunshine for the 4th and every train for days ahead brought its thousands. I was busy in the kitchen Wednesday afternoon stuffing a turkey when Lem walked in with a telegram in his hand.

"Polly," he announced, "the Allens are n't coming, to-night anyway. There 's a storm raging in the West; they 're stalled somewhere."

"A storm." I looked down on the dry streets. "Why, I thought we were promised the finest sort of weather."

"We were," said Lem, "but if I 'd been West, where I can figure on weather, I 'd have said it was puckering up to snow to-morrow."

"And my big dinner," I cried. "Who 's going to eat it? Then it was such a job fixing beds; we 've

worked hard." I pushed the turkey away and sat down with a discouraged feeling.

"Polly, the highways and byways of this city are crowded with people who stand waiting to eat us out of house and home. They would sing a benediction at the sight of a bed."

We did not have to go out in highways and byways, however, to find guests.

While Lem was talking the 'phone rang. I heard Mrs. Daggett's voice.

"I 'm in no end of perplexity, Mrs. Shipe," she said. "Do you know of any one in your apartment or anywhere else who would take a family in for a couple of nights?"

"Who are they?" I asked.

"It 's Rogers, my husband's secretary. He has a wife and four children. They were to move to-night into an apartment on Capitol Hill. The man who has it now is ill, so they can't get in there. The landlady where they are, threatens to turn them out bag and baggage in an hour. She says she can get fifteen dollars a day for the little apartment. That 's beyond their means. Mr. Daggett will pay if nothing else can be done, only it 's out-and-out extortion."

"I 'll take them in."

"You, dear! I had not dreamed of you doing anything. You have all the people you can tuck away now. Remember, it is n't one or two, it 's a big family."

"My company is stalled somewhere on the way East."

"It 's mighty good of you. Mr. Daggett will appreciate it as much as I do. For the next few days Rogers has all one man can tend to. I would have taken them in here but I have n't a corner left. We are putting children to sleep in bathtubs."

That was a merry dinner for the big family was the jolliest sort of a family. As we tucked four children away in a bed built for two, the house rang with laughter. I felt rather contented over the stalled Allens.

The dawn was creeping in Thursday morning when Densie laid her hand on me softly.

"Come and look outdoors, Mother," she whispered.

We stood by the north window looking out at the wildest storm we had seen in Washington. The wind shrieked about our top floor flinging clouds of snow against the glass till they hid the outside world. A sparrow perched on a narrow ledge outside snuggled closer into a niche of the wall, but did not move. Through a tube from the downstairs hall came a whistling, moaning dirge. Occasionally the storm lifted and we caught sight of deserted streets. The loose, dry snow was whirled here and there, one moment making a drift across the sidewalk, then it was caught up and blown across the street to slap at closed doors and curtained windows. Nobody was stirring except a few milkmen whose steaming horses struggled slowly to move the clogged wheels. A snowplow clanged down the hill trying to bore its way through the storm. It moved by fits and starts, flinging white drifts aside which settled back on the track

as if they had never been stirred. On Eighteenth street the yellow top of a stalled car showed through the whiteness.

"Oh, Mother," cried Densie, "there's our paper boy, plunging through the drifted alley. Let's get breakfast for him; nobody else might think of it, or they might n't have it ready."

We listened as he came puffing upstairs to fling a wet paper at one door after another. Densie brought him to the warm kitchen; it was the only room in the house where somebody did not lie asleep. He unwound his red muffler, shook the snow from his rubber boots and thawed out for a minute beside the radiator, before he attacked buttered toast and coffee. Between bites he told us news later than the paper brought about stalled trains and half-buried street cars, of telephone and telegraph wires down, of the depot waiting-room turned into a dormitory, of wind-torn wreaths and soaked decorations, of street sweepers trying to fight the elements and clear a path for the line of march.

"I don't see how they're goin' to inaugurate a President on a day like this," said the sturdy little chap while he wound the muffler about his neck and shook out a bundle of wet papers.

"Neither do I."

"I suppose there's a hundred thousand people feeling as I do this morning," said Densie. She glanced dejectedly from her gray suit and pink hat, then at the whirling storm outdoors.

"More than a hundred thousand, dear."

While I spoke the telephone rang. It was Senator Daggett.

"Mrs. Shipe, I want to thank you with all my heart for your hospitality; we're as grateful to you folks as if you had taken us in. Now, listen; you can't get over to the Senate this morning, cars are stalled everywhere, carriages and taxis are not to be got at any price, but my auto will call for you before ten o'clock; wrap up well, and a Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas," I answered with a laugh. The senator did not reply. A singing noise came between us. The wires were down.

The news a telegram brought us Friday seemed almost too good to be true. The Allens said since they were unlucky enough to have missed Inauguration, they had decided it was hardly worth while coming on to Washington. They had only two weeks to spare in the East and had decided they could have a better time in New York. I agreed with them — absolutely.

XXVI

THE BASEMENT RECEPTION

WE were leaving the House at the close of the inauguration exercises when Mrs. Adam Grove came toward me, smiling sweetly. I was surprised, because occasionally when I met her face to face she did not know me.

"Oh, Mrs. Shipe," she cried,— then she hesitated.

Adam Grove is one of the wealthiest men in Washington. Lem and I went to his home one night for a reception. It was the first really magnificent home I had ever seen and I almost envied them, not wholly for their money and position, but there is so much that money will buy, faultless service, luxury and beauty. Moods of that sort seldom last with me for more than a few minutes and I come back home, perfectly happy.

But about Mrs. Grove. She stood beside me in the lobby with her splendid ermine coat trailing on the floor and a worried look on her faded, pretty face.

"Mrs. Shipe, would you do something for me?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed." I wondered what she could want of me, with millions to buy any sort of service, any sort of friendship.

"Mr. Grove always keeps open house on Inauguration Day," she began. "He has done it since we came here in the Harrison administration. He and I receive upstairs with a group of our friends, then we throw the basement open. Everybody you can imagine throngs in there, policemen, newsboys, all sorts of people. There is usually a bigger crush than upstairs."

She looked at me helplessly as if it were not easy to voice her request in a polite fashion.

"Mr. Grove's sister has taken care of the downstairs crowd each Inauguration — is n't it queer; she enjoys it better than meeting our friends! I 've just had a wire from her. She 's stalled somewhere — in the blizzard — on her way South."

"You want me to help you?" I asked.

Her face glowed. She held out a tiny, white-gloved hand. "Would you?" she cried. "You understand,— it is downstairs — I wish you to help. There are any number of ladies coming to receive in the parlors. You won't have to do a thing, however, except to see that people are treated well. Everything is ready, there is a crowd of servants to tend to things, only Adam insists that somebody shall play hostess downstairs. I happened to catch sight of you, so —"

I turned to look up in my husband's face. I saw the woman's tactless explanation had rubbed him the wrong way. For a moment I felt as he did. I was on the verge of refusing to go when Densie spoke with eager shyness.

"May I come too, Mrs. Grove?" she asked. "I would love to do something like that."

The woman put out her hand impulsively. "Oh, you dear child, would you come? It is so sweet of you to offer. I would not think of bothering you, only Mr. Grove is ridiculously particular about the people who come in downstairs. There is n't a woman I 've invited for the afternoon, whom I would dare ask to do it. He might get the ridiculous notion into his head that I ought to look after the crowd myself. When I caught sight of you, I knew I had found just the right person. Only — I dreaded asking, because I had never called on you."

A few minutes later we were nodding good-by to Lem and the boys from the window of Mrs. Grove's luxurious limousine. All the way home she chatted nervously. The woman, trivial as she was, knew she had committed a breach of good manners. When we reached the house she excused herself — and put us in the care of a maid.

I stood in front of a mirror brushing my hair when Densie laid her rosy, laughing face against my cheek.

"She was perfectly ridiculous, was n't she, Mother? Imagine having all her money — still she did n't know how to ask one properly to do a little thing like this!"

"It was horrid, child; I 'm wishing now I had said 'no.'"

"Oh, you are n't, Mother. I am doing it for Mr. Grove, not for her. Father and I met him one day when we were in the park and he walked home with us. He 's a dandy. Besides — it will be such fun!"

It *was* fun. The doors had not been thrown open when we went downstairs. Servants were rushing about. The big basement had been cleared and every room in it except the kitchen was transformed into an impromptu café. Small, white-linened tables were ready for guests while a lunch counter ran the full length of the place. There was the gleam of silver and glass and a glow of flowers. As we came downstairs we had a glimpse into magnificent parlors banked with hothouse blossoms, in the dining-room were richly adorned tables and buffets.

It was more homelike and cosy in the basement than upstairs. The glow of electricity through red-shaded lamps had a warmth that was wanting in the scintillation from cut-glass chandeliers. There was a pleasant hospitality about neatly gowned maids which one did not feel in servile French waiters.

While we arranged the tables, a man came in from the greenhouse with a load of plants. Mr. Grove, so he said, had ordered flowering things to be set wherever room could be made for them.

"May I fix these?" cried Densie eagerly.

We began to fill the low, broad sashes of the basement windows with small pots, in which pink and white primroses or scarlet geraniums bloomed.

"Could anything look as snug and pretty as that, Mother?" cried Densie, when we moved across the room to study the effect. "Why, they 're exactly like rows of stiff little plants in the picture of an English inn. Imagine filling up a window fresh every week if you want to, with things just ready to blossom.

They can have their tapestry galleries and limousines and yachts, but me for the hothouse, even if it's no bigger than a chicken coop!"

"You and I agree, young lady," cried a hearty voice beside us. "Our idea of luxury is the same. For me, too — things growing and blossoming all the while."

It was Adam Grove who spoke.

"Is n't this my nice, little friend, Miss Shipe?" he asked. Then he shook hands in his cordial way.

"Why are n't you upstairs?" he questioned.

I explained.

The man's face flushed. "Did my wife ask you to receive — down here?" he demanded gravely.

"No, she told me of her predicament and I offered. You have not seen her since she came in?"

"I have n't; she is dressing, I believe. I discovered a few minutes ago that my sister had not arrived so I came down to do the honors. There are plenty of fine ladies to entertain upstairs. The people who come here are my special guests. I had never dreamed of such a pleasure as having you to help. My wife really knew her business!"

"Do leave things to Densie and me," I begged. "Mrs. Grove is anxious to have you upstairs."

"I am big enough to be divided," he said with his hearty laugh.

When the doors were thrown open the rush began. I never saw such hungry throngs in my life. I had imagined it would take an army to demolish the piles of food in the kitchen. There were mountains of

sandwiches and doughnuts, pans of baked beans, punch-bowls filled with salad, tiers of pie and cake and huge caldrons of coffee, tea and chocolate. Smoking roasts stood ready to be made into sandwiches, while the pantry looked like a delicatessen store.

Still before it grew dark, provisions were getting so low that men were despatched to a market for fresh supplies, and cooks were opening canned goods which had been laid in as reserve stock. Time and again the doors were closed for a few minutes because it was impossible to seat another guest or find a clean plate. Densie and I were everywhere at once. Enveloped in big gingham aprons we helped to wash dishes, carry trays or dish up food. Nobody stood on ceremony. Once I saw Mr. Grove with a broom sweeping a debris of paper napkins into a corner. He was a rare host, hearty and genial till the last guest had been served.

From the basement window we caught glimpses of guests thronging in upstairs; women in gorgeous gowns and magnificent furs, men in uniform or afternoon clothes, descending from autos and carriages. Street cars ran at long intervals, leaving men and women stalled miles from home, facing a keen, chill wind. We entertained mothers with wet, hungry children clinging to them, throngs of snow shovelers, telegraph and newsboys, policemen, and men who for hours had been tramping soaked and weary in the parade. There were expressmen, cabbies and wayfarers of every degree. Groups, who waited on the sidewalk for homegoing cars, were brought in by Mr. Grove himself,

to be warmed and cheered. Sometimes, when old or feeble, they were sent home in an auto or cab.

Many a time during the afternoon his wife sent frantic messages for his presence upstairs. Occasionally he left us, but only for a few minutes. Once while he passed, he overheard a remark Densie made. "Are n't you glad, Mother, we are here instead of upstairs?"

He answered before I could.

"You 're dead right! It 's tame up there; there 's something doing here."

In the midst of the throng he came to introduce to us a tall, gracious woman. When I looked into her face I knew she was his sister. A minute later she left me to respond to a dozen calls.

Late in the afternoon street cars began to run on schedule time and our guests grew fewer. As the darkness fell a group come slowly down the steps, glancing about them perplexedly. It was a little German band. The men's hands were stiff and blue, their faces looked haggard and discouraged. A high-water mark on their soaked trousers told how they had waded all day through mud, snow and slush. They piled their instruments behind the door and I led them to a table beside a radiator. They tried to tell me what they wanted. I could understand little of their broken English except coffee. In a few minutes I ushered a waitress to their table. She bore a tray piled high with food. They glanced at each other furtively while we set the dishes before them. How they ate.

When they rose to leave, the leader pulled a shabby

wallet from his pocket and offered me a bill. I was trying to make him understand that this was no public café when Mr. Grove joined us and greeted them in German. A sudden joy leaped into each homely, weather-beaten face. The fervor of their hand shakes was eloquent as their rush of guttural. The host himself accompanied them to the door and bundled them into his big touring car. Before it started, I saw him slip a bill into each hand. The gratitude in the rugged faces was touching.

"I 'm a foolish old chap," confessed Mr. Grove as he shut the door behind him, "but a kinship with every German I meet tugs at my heart. My mother came from the Fatherland and she taught me German when I was a little chap cuddling in her arms. It is almost a shame I was born in America; I 'd have made such a patriotic German. I doubt if these poor chaps made their fare from New York to-day. People don't open windows in a blizzard to throw out dimes, or stop and listen to music when they have wet feet. The poor little German band got bitten as thousands of others did, only I 'm thankful they blew in here. It did my heart good to listen to mother's tongue."

He jumped into a fur coat and brought Densie and me home himself, although guests thronged the upper rooms. I could see it hurt him because his wife did not come downstairs to bid us good-by.

I know the sort of woman she is, not unkind or unappreciative but trivial to the very core of her nature. Adam Grove had missed the happiness of a real home, of children and of much his heart must have longed

for. Any one who looked into his face with its square, strong jaw, his straightforward, kindly eyes and that inflexible mouth which smiled so winningly must have trusted him, even loved him. I had heard him called loyal, upright, generous, and a stanch friend. It is a boon to the world when men like Adam Grove possess money. If he were poor he would still be a stanch friend, only money helps so wonderfully. Astonished gladness came into the faces of those weary, disheartened Germans when he handed each one a yellow-backed bill; still their gratitude was nothing in comparison to the delight which transformed each jaded face as he grasped their hands and greeted them in the mother tongue. Gold counts — it always must — I suppose, but the wealth of the mints is cold stuff in comparison to human sympathy.

Nothing distinguishes the difference between two people so much as the way in which they show appreciation. On Inauguration Day, Densie and I came home perfectly happy from the basement reception. Nothing was needed in the way of "thanks." Mrs. Grove, however, ordered a footman to wrap up a silver basket filled with bonbons which stood on the dining-room table. He brought it to us with her compliments. It looked magnificent, but utterly out of place in our sitting-room; I felt as if we ought to live up to it.

Then Bob sneaked in when nobody was watching and ate half of the rich candy. He did not begin to enjoy life again till after a big dose of castor oil. That was the appreciation of Mrs. Grove!

Next morning came a note from Mr. Grove to Densie. He wrote:

May I enjoy thinking, dear little Lady, that when I watch things bud in my greenhouse, you have the blossoms. You won the heart of our old Scotch gardener by your praise of his geraniums. It will give him as much pleasure as it does me to fill your windows each week with things which are ready to bloom. Your kind mother and you made Inauguration Day one I will long remember.

Densie and the boys were off for a tramp in the country when the gardener came with his gift and I was as impatient as a child for their return. I stood watching the sunshine gleam through marvelous spots of color; the vivid crimson of folded cyclamens, soft pink of primroses, gold of daffodils, purple of crocuses, and the lively scarlet of geraniums. There were many white blossoms besides. One window was filled with blue hyacinths, a blue so soft I feared to touch it, because my finger might have left a smirch.

Until we left town the old gardener came once a week with gaudy tulips, crinkled white narcissus, gorgeous azaleas, roses, creamy freesias and many a fragrant thing which was an untold joy.

XXVII

THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS

LEMUEL speaks of himself as reticent. He thinks he can draw a veil over his mind and do a lot of thinking while people look on at a blank personality. I have known a few men and women inscrutable as he thinks he is, but they are few. To me Lem is pellucid. It is not that he speaks of what he is turning over in his mind,— he can keep his own council — for about so long; but all the time I can see an idea working away inside him, a temptation closing in on him,— or trouble haunting him as clearly as one can watch the works of a clock which is set in glass. I have observed such a process go on silently for days, weeks, sometimes longer. I never intrude upon Lem's inner life, if one might call it such a condition; I watch the outer signs and know almost invariably when he is preparing to make a clean breast of his trouble.

A few months after our return to the East, I realized he was at cross purposes with something — in his mind. I kept wondering what it was. At home conditions were serene. He had been keen as a boy over his committee work. He told me about everything: they were considering the question of a new park, an expensive municipal building and the division

of a wide tract of country into building lots. Gas, electric and street car companies, the health and fire departments had put problems before them to be solved, for Washington is ruled by Congress instead of by a mayor and aldermen.

Early in April Lem suggested we take a drive into the country.

I wanted to have the children go but he objected.

"I 'd rather go alone with you, Polly. I want you to see a tract of country the District is looking over; it may be opened up for building purposes if the committee will stand for a bridge and a new road. I went through it a week ago with Hauser and real-estate men. It 's as beautiful a place as I ever set eyes on; you 'll enjoy the drive."

Lemuel had arrived at a point where he wanted to get away clear from any interruption or fear of interruption and thresh it out whatever it was. I dressed and was ready when he came at three o'clock with a carriage.

In the Southern country spring comes so quickly and with such a balmy freshness that before you realize winter is past, the world is green. We turned off Connecticut avenue, climbed a long hill, then dipped away down into the open country.

"Mighty pleasant here, is n't it, Polly?" asked Lem.

"So pleasant, it will be the undoing of me; I 'll get to dreaming and wishing for a home in this green glen."

"You 'd like to live in a place like this?"

"Lemuel, there is n't any comparison between such

a home and five rooms on the top floor of a great building where we have n't even a back door, where you 're thankful to have a sparrow perk in at the window, where sixty families herd under the same roof, where there 's the rumble of elevators day and night and the rush of cars and autos on the street below. Why greenness and quiet like this is paradise!"

"I thought it would hit you just right," said Lem with a satisfied smile.

"Oh, it hits me, only we don't own this wonderful glen."

"We might own half an acre of it."

"Half an acre of it! How?"

"It 's more than likely the District will allow it to be opened up. If they should — I thought of building. The plan is to run a wide boulevard straight through, divide it into big lots, then the place will build itself."

"Yes, but, Lem, where are we going to get the money? A place out here would cost —"

"Oh, about twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand! Where in creation could we get twenty thousand?"

"It 's waiting for us now."

"Where?"

"I 'm not going to talk about that till you 've seen the corner I 've set my heart on."

We drove slowly for the roads were still soft. They ran up and down hill and there were bad holes into which a wheel might plunge at any unguarded moment. Presently we reached the heart of an old

wood. The banks, which rose high above us were tangled thick with honeysuckle. Amid the dead, stiff foliage peeped a million fresh green shoots. Clumps of snowy blood-root gleamed here and there, arbutus was in bloom under bunches of rusty leaves, we passed a bank starred purple with hepatica and between the wheel tracks dandelions perked up bright as gold. The trees were in bud, some had leafed out, a clump of willows in a wet hollow drooped their long branches over a pool, making green shadows which wavered when the wind stirred.

"I don't know what the winters would be like out here," mused Lem, "of course a car would be a necessity —"

"Oh, the cars would ruin it, Lem; surely they would never run a line through these woods."

"Not yet. I was thinking of an auto."

"You talk, Lemuel, as if we were millionaires."

"Nonsense, cars don't cost outrageously, if you get a man who can double up, who helps around the house as well as being chauffeur."

I did not speak. I had a glimmering idea of what Lemuel had been turning over in his mind for weeks.

"Whoa there!" He pulled up the horse at a turn of the road.

"Here 's the corner I have in mind. I would n't level the bank, it might be terraced a bit, and there are some fine trees that would n't have to come down. Look at that veteran oak. It 's good for seventy more years." He backed the horse off so we could

view the lot from the opposite bank. "Nothing could be built to cut off this cross-road view, Polly." Lem's enthusiasm warmed up. He was laying the walls of a home, stone by stone.

"I have an idea of a brick house with rough cobble-stone pillars and a wide, hospitable piazza running round two sides. We could have honeysuckle climbing over it. In a year or two it would bury the house — nothing grows here like honeysuckle. A driveway could be cut to run up the slope, then down on the other side. We would want a low stone parapet around the bank. It looks as if a freshet washed through here in the spring. In a new place like this one is sure of the best sort of neighbors, because when it 's laid out, they won't allow a house built that costs less than $12,000. What do you think of it, Polly?"

"Why, I think,— it 's — a paradise."

"I knew it would hit your fancy."

The horse began to stretch its neck. An old barrel had been sunk in soft mud at the corner of "our" lot. A brook trickled down the bank, flowing into the moss-grown trough with a quiet gurgle. Lem jumped out, led the horse across the road and undid the check rein. The animal buried its nose in the cool water and sucked it up with slow content. Lem stood beside, waiting till its thirst was quenched.

"I don't know but we could hang on to the brook and the horse trough; it 's certainly picturesque." Then he stepped across the narrow trickle in the weedy ditch to pick a bunch of shining cowslips.

"This takes us clear back home, Polly dear," he said while he handed me the flowers; "don't you feel that way?"

I could not trust myself to tell him how much it did make me think of home.

We drove slowly to the bottom of the glen past a little house which stood alone by the roadside. A tall lilac bush by the front door was blossoming into purple tassels. An old woman in a sunbonnet knelt before a bunch of green shoots in the garden while she grubbed around them with her fingers.

"Hi," called Lem, "won't you tell me where this road leads to?" He pointed to an opening in the woods straight ahead of us.

She rose stiffly and came to lean over the gate before she answered.

"Away through the Dean pasture, then if you strike off to the left you 'll come out on the Chevy Chase road."

"Thank you," said Lem; "it 's mighty pleasant down here in these woods."

"Yes, it 's gettin' pleasant — now the spring 's come — but 't ain't very lively in the winter. There 's weeks at the time when I don't set eyes on a soul exceptin' my old man."

"Good-by," we said cordially.

"I want to get on a good road, Polly, where the horse can take care of himself then I 'll talk with you," said Lem, as we drove into the wood. "There 's something I had on my mind for weeks."

He did not begin until we were out on the high-

road, where swift horses and reckless autos went flashing past us.

"When it comes to business, Pauline, you're no great shakes; still there's an affair I ought to tell you about. We've got to think of the future, as well as of the present."

"That's what I keep saying, Lem; we are living now almost to the verge of our income."

"Yes, only a man in my position ought to have something besides the $7,500 a year. I'm facing a proposition where we can have $5,000 more."

"Twelve thousand a year!"

"Yes, we need that amount to live as we ought to do. The $5,000 stands waiting for me to stretch out my hand and take it."

"What's the position?"

"It isn't a position exactly. I haven't got to do a stroke of work for it, the whole thing's — velvet."

"I don't understand."

"That's the trouble, it's an involved sort of question. You won't find it easy to understand, Polly — because you haven't much of a business head. Listen. There's a proposition before the District committee now — we're about evenly divided on. A Washington corporation wants to increase its stock issue by at least a million dollars. They can't do it till Congress passes a bill on it. The matter comes before our committee first. If we report out favorably, the bill would pass without a doubt."

"Yes." Lem had paused and glanced at me questioningly. "Yes, I understand; go on."

"Some of our committee are for it, others are dead against it. Yesterday they were evenly divided. I 'm the odd man whose vote is needed for or against it. I have n't lined up yet because I 've been studying the question and threshing it out — in my mind."

"Where does the five thousand a year come in?"

"Wait a minute, Polly, till I explain —" Lem's voice grew impatient. "A man came to me some weeks ago — he knew my vote was all that was needed to carry the bill. He — he — offered or rather he gave me to understand that if I voted for the proposition I would be handed a block of stock amounting to $50,000. This draws eight to ten per cent. dividend. It means $4,000 or $5,000 a year."

"Lemuel," I cried, "is n't that bribery — out and out bribery?"

He snatched the whip from its socket and snapped it across the back of the horse, which had slowed down to a comfortable trot. It leaped out and went swinging quickly over the country road.

"Is n't it buying your vote?" I asked.

"No-it-is-not-buying-my-vote." Lem punctuated his answer with decisive pauses. "I knew that was what you would say — exactly."

"How could you know?"

"Oh, Polly, you jump at a conclusion, you take such a personal, one-sided view of things."

"Are they giving every man on the committee — who votes for them — $50,000?"

"Certainly not — there are nineteen men on the committee. Ten of them at $50,000 — would leave

only a half-million for the corporation. That would be a losing proposition for them."

"Why — should n't each one of them get it — as well as you?"

"Because — well — there 's a few men on the committee they would n't dare approach. If they put it up to Ogden for instance, he 'd kick anybody into the corridor who suggested such a thing."

"Because it 's — corruption?"

"Good God! no, Polly. There 's no corruption about it. Ogden stands ready to vote for the proposition."

"Why?"

"Simply because he thinks — as I am beginning to do — that it would be to the interest of this corporation and to the public at large if we pass the bill. It could increase the plant and its all-round efficiency if the extra stock was put on the market."

"Why are half of the men against it?"

"Because," Lem's voice grew prickly with irritation, "there are always two sides to every question and the whole thing is a perfectly legitimate transaction."

"All except this $50,000 bribe."

The horse fairly jumped when Lem slapped its back with the reins. He laughed but his face was wrinkled into an ugly scowl.

"Lemuel, I did n't mean —" Then I checked myself. "I guess my conscience jumped at conclusions."

"I 've been having a seance with my own con-

science," answered Lem slowly, "and I 've come to the conclusion that too much conscience in a politician is like his appendix. It 's got to be operated on when it gets to the tormenting point. Besides — like an appendix — it is n't a vital necessity."

"I think — it is — *the* vital necessity."

Lem turned the horse around.

"We 'd better go home." There was a sullen tone in his voice. "I was an idiot to put the question up to you — a woman can never understand politics if she lives to be a hundred. I don't know why she should be expected to,"— he mused; "her brain is built differently from a man's. Her mind is an apple off another tree."

We sat silent. Lemuel lit a cigar and began to smoke. Once or twice he frowned irritably and turned to glance at me with a queer look.

"Lem," I pleaded, "don't leave me out in the cold like this. I don't understand a great deal about politics — I'm trying to learn though all the time — if you 'll explain about the bill again — I won't interrupt or criticize. If you should take this $50,000 I do want to know why you get it."

He began sulkily at first. "Well, it 's like this. All the corporation asks of me is that I look into the matter thoroughly and vote as I think best. Two of the Washington papers are hot against it, only that 's their business; one paper is nothing any way but an iconoclast. It does n't give any corporation a fair show."

"Have n't you advised with any one?"

"Advised! Good Lord, we 've threshed the subject till I 'm dead weary of it."

"Tell me just the outline of it, Lem. I 'll try to understand."

He went over the story from beginning to end. Before he had finished, I understood, everything except why, in order to get a bill passed which was perfectly legitimate, any corporation should offer such a princely gift to one man.

"Have I made it intelligible?" he asked.

"Yes, I think I see it clearly now."

"Well, what do you think?"

"Oh, Lem, I can't tell. You 've been chewing on it for weeks, let me study it out. You have n't got to vote on it right away."

"No, not for a week or two."

A few days later I sat on a bench beside the car track on the Capitol plaza reading an evening paper, when a man spoke to me. I looked up; it was Senator Trent.

"Waiting for Lemuel?" he asked.

"Yes, I came over to walk home with him. It was hot in his office. It 's pleasant out here. He said he could not leave for half an hour."

"Come for a stroll round the square with me. You never saw finer tulips in your life, than are in bloom to-day. I passed them on my way from the library."

We wandered round the green plaza, talking about Wolverton folks, about politics out West, about life

in Washington, and the prospect of getting home before hot weather began.

During a moment's pause I asked,

"Senator, does Lemuel pan out as you had hoped he would?"

He stopped and looked down at me with his straightforward gaze.

"Lemuel is panning out extraordinarily well so far. You remember I prophesied big things for him. I did more than that, when I put his nomination through I vouched for him to the District. He is making good up to now beyond my hopes."

"Oh, I am so happy," I said.

We walked on for a few minutes in silence, then the senator stopped and turned his searching eyes upon mine.

"Has Lemuel told you anything about the — bill which is to be voted on next week?"

I felt my face blaze scarlet. I nodded. My lips were too parched for speech.

"I 'm thankful Lemuel 's on the District committee. It needs one man's vote — only one — to turn down the most flagrant steal that 's been put up to Congress in a session or two. I 've been wishing I was on the District committee in the Senate. Since I 'm not, I feel that Lem's vote may be all that is needed to swing things straight. You tell him I said so."

"I will," I whispered.

Lemuel sat reading the paper that evening by the open window. I stood for a moment glancing over

his shoulder. The paper he called an iconoclast had devoted an entire sheet to what they labeled "The Most Gigantic Swindle" ever attempted. That grim accusation blazed out across the top of the sheet, under it were subheads accusing the —— Corporation of high treason, of jobbing, of foul play and infamous treachery.

Lemuel shifted his eyes to the opposite page and when I laid my hand on his shoulder he seemed to be engrossed in the baseball news.

I leaned over him and put my finger on the glaring head line.

"I met Senator Trent to-day, Lemuel, while I waited for you on the Square. I had a long talk with him. He spoke about the —— bill. He feels about it exactly as this paper does. He asked me to give you a message."

I repeated what the senator said word for word.

"And," I added, "I felt so proud and happy; he talked about the record you were making. He said, 'I vouched for Lemuel to the District when I put his nomination through and he is making good beyond my hopes.'"

The paper dropped on the floor, Lemuel jumped up and began his quick, nervous tramp about the room. His face was flushed and his eyes shone.

"Beyond his hopes?" he asked. "Were those his words?"

"His words exactly," I answered.

"I 'm going for a walk, Polly," he said; "it 's close — here."

I did not offer to go with him. I watched him go striding down the street then he crossed the bridge and turned away into the open country.

It was late when he came home, I sat beside the lamp reading. When I looked up into his face I knew the victory had been won.

A few days later the —— bill was turned down by the District committee by a vote of ten to nine.

Lemuel never mentioned that corporation affair to me again. One day during the summer he took us all for a drive. We turned off the avenue and went wandering down a hedged lane till we came to the country road which led into the glen. The banks were matted with blossoming honeysuckle, the trees threw wide shadows across the road and the country echoed with bird songs. Farther down we came on a gang of workmen who were gashing a new boulevard through the lonely wood. Lem stopped, the horse spied a moss-grown trough by the roadside. The tiny brook still bubbled through its wooden spout but the green thicket on the bank above had been laid bare by pruning knives. Two swarthy Italians were hacking with axes at the underbrush. Across the brook lay the stark-naked trunk of a great tree.

"My God," cried Lem, "what a sin! They've cut down that splendid old oak."

While we drove away I saw him look back with a regretful glance.

"There never was a sightlier place than that!" he said.

XXVIII

THOSE RIDICULOUS BAGSTERS

OCCASIONALLY at the Congressional Club we had cozy, gossipy afternoons, when, as Lemuel called it, our " Swap Experience Circle " met. I told once how we entertained Harriet Webb. That led to stories from all around the circle about the constituent who lands on his congressman for a bed, refreshment and entertainment, when he comes to Washington. I listened to more than one tale of woe. The people who featured in every story were the sort for whom a hostess cares nothing; sometimes they were men or women whom she had never seen in her life. The folks from home we would have enjoyed entertaining, had to be hunted up; they were not the sort who made a convenience of their friends.

Western women told of incredibly long sojourns, because people do not cross a continent to stay for a week or two. Women from the North, South and East had their trials. Mrs. Hazlett, who lives at the Willard, said their bill that month for transient entertainment amounted to three hundred dollars. There was not in the number one person she could classify as a friend, the majority were utter strangers. She confessed that she never wanted to meet one of them again.

Their case was perhaps the limit. The Hazletts' home town is only fifty miles from Washington and half its population came to the city for concerts, or the theater, to shop and for all sorts of affairs. She acknowledged that only a rich man could run from their district. Krouse, who was here before them, said it cost him three thousand a year to entertain constituents.

Mrs. Oakley, who came from the Middle West, said they spent one-third of their salary in this way. Oakley was a generous, free-hearted fellow, but the burden fell chiefly on his wife. She told one story so well that the group who listened advised her to go into vaudeville. Only we sympathized with her while we laughed, because we all knew people like the Bagsters.

"Last Thursday morning," she began, "I felt utterly spent. When I tried to account for my worn-out condition, I found that Robert and I had not dined alone for twenty-three days. Either we had dinner engagements or we were entertaining at home. I decided to celebrate a home dinner and began by trying to think of something Robert liked particularly well — something he had not tasted for months. I laughed aloud when I decided what to have. Guess what it was!"

We guessed everything from corned beef and cabbage to pheasants, but she shook her head.

"It was salt mackerel with plain boiled potatoes. When Blanchette — how is that for the name of the blackest cook you ever saw? — came upstairs to have

me order dinner she rolled her eyes and cried, 'Lawd a Massy, Missis!'

"'Don't swear, Blanchette,' I said, 'but get two of the finest, meatiest, fattest mackerels you can find, leave them under running water till seven o'clock. Then — if you don't know how to cook them — tell me; I 'll come down and do it myself.'

"'What 's we a-goin' to have in the kitchen, Missis? Sam nor Car'line won't touch vittels like that!'

"'Oh, have a chicken or steak or something.'

"After Blanchette had gone I stood by the window looking out. I was luxuriating in the delight of one long, unbroken day at home. It seemed an unusually nice day to be at home. It was raining, not in torrents, but sogging away in a disheartened sort of fashion. The sidewalks looked sticky and folks who passed wore a discouraged expression. Indoors it was dark and gloomy.

"A wood fire burned in my den. I pulled the red curtains together, turned up the lights, slipped into a silk kimono and lay down on the couch to read Locke's latest book. If you know Locke and love his books as I do, you can imagine how I felt when I give you an imitation of the 'phone conversation I had with my husband at three o'clock.

"I picked up the receiver cheerful and smiling as May Irwin. When I laid it down I caught sight of my face in the mirror and just then I could have given a good imitation of Camille or any other doleful person.

"Robert began:

"'Good morning, dear, how are you feeling?'

"'Absolutely tip-top.' Then I laughed, you see I was still under the spell of Locke's fascinating hero.

"'I 'm glad of that, dear.' There was a relieved tone in Robert's voice. 'I hated to break in on you, if — you were not feeling real — cheerful.'

"'Why?' I asked. I began to guess all sorts of things.

"'Well, I 'm afraid I 've got to bring folks home to dinner and I did n't know how you —'

"'Robert, to-night?'

"'Yes, dearest.' His voice sounded like the squeak of a mouse.

"'Can't you feed them at a hotel?'

"'No, darling.'

"'Why?'

"'They are living at a hotel, now.'

"'Who are they?'

"I heard Robert clear his throat and audibly summon up courage.

"'It 's the Bagsters.'

"'The Bagsters from home — those ridiculous Bagsters who live on Winthrop Hill?'

"'Yes, dearest. They are going home after a trip around the world.' Robert was figuratively on his marrow-bones before this time.

"'Well, look here,' I announced decisively. 'I won't — feed — them, do you understand?'

"There was a silence of several moments. Then

I asked. 'Robert, are you still there, did you understand?'

"'Yes,' he whispered.

"'Well, listen. Do you know what we are going to have for dinner to-night? Two salt mackerel with plain boiled potatoes. I hate the stuff, I ordered it because you like it.'

"'I do, it was dear of you to think of me. But, Elsa, would n't it be just as easy to cook five or six mackerel as two?'

"'Mackerel, common salt mackerel for those ridiculous Bagsters! Robert Oakley, you don't know what you are talking about. They would say I chose it purposely to insult them. They would tell it all over town; why it would be sufficient to cut down your majority next fall. Don't you know it would?'

"'I suppose you are right.' I could hear my husband's sigh over the wire.

"'It 's a settled thing, is it, that I 've got to have them here?'

"'No, only they 're coming back in ten minutes, and I don't know what to tell them. I sent my secretary to show them around the House so I could talk to you. They almost asked for an invitation. Mrs. Bagster wants particularly to see you.'

"'The confounded old snapdragon — she knows I despise her. Is he along?'

"'Yes, and —'

"'And what?'

"'And the three daughters.'

"'Oh, Robert — really — that's a rank imposition.'

"'Elsa, I can tell them you have been taken suddenly ill. I'll feed them at Harvey's or — somewhere.'

"When Robert gets on that strain he knows I capitulate.

"'Well, invite them, only remember I must have a week to recover from it.'

"'Dear, I'm going to send you that set of white fox fur you wanted. You are the best wife that ever lived.'

"'I know I am.'

"'You don't realize what this means to me. It's horrible that one should have to bring a man like Bagster into his home at all. Only — he might go round telling we are stingy or bumptious or he might say anything! She's worse. They could swing five hundred votes away from me.'

"'Robert,' I confessed. 'I really don't want the white fox. I'll play hostess to the Queen's taste, only — remember it is not for those vulgar Bagsters I am doing it nor for the nomination nor because I care for what they say, I am doing it for you. I wish one thing though.'

"'What?'

"'That when they went around the world, they had landed on the Pacific coast.'

"'So do I, dear, only I am grateful. Good-by, here they come now.'

"You would never believe what the next few hours

held for me. Blanchette had to be smoothed down. That meant making her a present of my old fur hat. Blanchette has a way of going into a towering rage, with her eyes fixed on the discards of my wardrobe. Dabney, our butler, had his afternoon off, we could not locate him anywhere,— so I sent to Bansome's for a waiter.

"If I ever felt thankful I knew how to cook, it was that afternoon. I pushed the sulky Blanchette into a corner with jobs she was *willing* to do and flew around as I used to do in the days before we could afford servants. When I entered the kitchen I was in a towering rage, before I left I decided I had n't had so much fun in years. The ridiculous side of the affair began to appeal to me. I was wishing I had Locke at hand to work the scene into one of his whimsical stories. Even if planning, marketing and cooking were crowded into a few hours, it was a superb dinner, so superb, I hated to set it before these low-bred, stupid Bagsters.

"I looked like the proverbial parboiled hostess at seven when I got into my swellest gown and loaded myself with jewels. That was done to impress the Bagsters. Also, for the benefit of those same Bagsters I took from the top shelf a brand of dignity I reserve for special occasions.

"Then I sailed downstairs to greet them.

"I believe Robert is now assured of his nomination — that is if Bagster has any finger in the political home pie. All through the evening I felt like saying as I do many a time: 'God forgive me for the

falsity of it.' Each of you, with a husband in politics knows what I mean!

"When his women folk are about him, Bagster is as lively as a picture on the wall. It is difficult to understand how he can be a power politically, still he is! Oh, but the women! The three common-looking, vulgar daughters are worse than the mother. Robert and I simply sat still and let them talk. They told what they had paid for their gowns and jewels in Paris, how they hobnobbed aboard ship with a real, live French duke. Cleora had snap-shotted his grace and she wore his portrait in a diamond-studded locket. The reminiscences I listened to about the dear, cunning little duke were funny; why you never heard anything so funny in your life! I know the rates in every expensive hotel from Kobi to Calcutta. I heard how foreign dignitaries laid their hearts and titles at the feet of those girls. They made a screaming joke of their presentation to the Pope — forgetting we are Catholics! They told questionable stories in mongrel French, they adore Egypt, love Japan, go 'giggy' over Gibraltar, dote on Oberammergau, worship Constantinople but came home hating America because it is so beastly plebeian. Oh, I must not forget the story of how they passed the customs.

"'Don't you get scared, Mrs. Oakley, of the bloomin' old customs, if you ever go abroad,' advised Hortense, 'I was, till we got through. Pshaw! That punky inspector was nothing but a bogy man. I 'll give you a tip and not charge you for it either. Do as I did, pick out the handsomest young inspector

on the dock, beam on him, then sail straight under his nose with a smile on your lips, a wink in your eye and thirty pairs of kid gloves in the roof of your hat. The only thing that fatigued us was — pa! He trailed after us as scared as a liver-colored pup. He 's such a thin little runt, we had padded him all over with silk and laces and embroideries and every sort of doodah. Lord! you ought to have seen us strip it off him in the hotel. He was in a cold sweat before that time.'

"'Horry, my dear child,' pleaded the little father. Then his terror-stricken eyes turned upon Robert. 'How can you fabricate such ridiculous stories when Congressman Oakley knows my integrity and the hide-bound stand I take for high protection!'

"'Oh, Pa! Protection! What a measly little fool you are!' cried the girl with her screaming laugh.

"When the door shut on the family, Robert was fairly snorting with rage.

"'Elsa,' he said, 'I 'll never subject you to anything like this again. I 'd rather get out of politics. I can't truckle to such folks.'

"Next morning Robert sent me that set of white fox. I had a great mind to refuse it. Only — when I thought it over I decided I had earned it — honestly."

XXIX

THE QUESTION OF COLOR

ONE of the problems which perplexed me in Washington was how to get along with colored help. We have only one negro in Wolverton, old Minerva, who lives alone in a little shack on Stubbs' Hill. She is brown and withered and bent, but as good a worker as ever lived, and in steady demand by housewives who don't keep help. Minerva had cleaned and washed for me many a time and I have always respected and liked her. I used to have a queer, unspoken, conscience-stricken feeling, when I set a little table for her apart from us. I remember wondering while I infused tea for her one day in a small pot, why color should count so, just while we were eating. Our bread had been kneaded by her hands then we set her to eat by herself.

The negroes in Washington were a shock to me after Minerva. They are so different and so many — one-third of the people in Washington are black. Daphne was the first one I came into close contact with. She was two, perhaps three generations from a father and mother born in slavery, and yet all her short life, eighteen years or so, she had gone about with one creed which she made her defense: "I 'm just as good as white folks." She slept contentedly in a dark,

damp, little closet in the cellar which Mrs. Speck said "was plenty good enough for niggers." It seemed criminal. After a fit of uneasy conscience I prepared a room for her on the third floor. She would not move; she would rather change her place than climb all those stairs so she told me. I left her to her underground liberty as you would shut a cat in the cellar at night.

Daphne went at last and another came, then another. I began to think of them, not as human beings, but as dishwashing, scrubbing and ironing machines. I never grew acquainted with them or knew their thoughts or understood them. I felt pushed off, away from everything that was in common with them by that constant iteration, "I 'm just as good as white folks." Their immorality shocked me, when we sheltered it under our own roof. At first I labored with them as missionaries had done probably in their native jungles. One day I understood and gave up the battle. Theirs was not immorality, it was unmorality; it was as hopeless as their "I 'm just as good as white folks."

During our third session in Washington, the Floyds from Kansas lived in an apartment next door and she and I grew quite friendly. Time and again she told me I was away off on the colored question. She came in one morning and found me servantless. I had sent the last one away paying her a week's wages for a few days' work, but without a character.

"You don't give niggers a square deal," she said.

"I treat them as well as I know how."

"That's it, you treat them too white; you've got to treat them black."

"How?" I asked perplexedly.

"As children, perfectly irresponsible children."

"Oh," I cried, "it's the irresponsibility I can't grow accustomed to. I feel I am unjust and cruel, for I have grown to hate the entire colored race. In the West we never gave color a thought; here I resent it when one jams down beside me on the street car. It gets on my nerves to have them working in my kitchen, touching our food with their hands, fingering the things in my room. I hate their dishonesty, their ridiculous self-importance, every exasperating trait they possess. The war was a horrible mistake. I could watch them go back to slavery and rejoice at the sight of it."

"My dear," cried Mrs. Floyd, "that is treason. I come of rebel stock and I am still a rebel against domestic conditions in this city, but there is more justice in me toward the colored race than in you."

She was the sort of woman who loved to study human conditions and one night she persuaded me to go and hear a colored preacher lecture. I came home and did a lot of "thinking in my own tank," as Uncle Si calls it.

The lecture was given in a little, ill-ventilated church, which smelt palpably. It was packed to the door. We were ushered up to a gallery where we could look down on a throng of black and yellow faces. The man who spoke was sooty. He gave us strange glimpses at a soul which rebels not so much

against the color of the skin on his body but at the conditions of his life. When he rose, he stood for a moment silent, looking over the audience, then he said, "Among the hundreds of my people here I see faces of every color. I am proud of one thing; not one drop of white blood runs in my veins!"

I felt a sudden throb of admiration for a man who could feel and speak like that. It seemed to a white-skinned woman like a strange view-point, only there was the same race feeling my Scotch grandfather had for his own nation.

Mrs. Floyd and I walked home, for it was a lovely night. After a long silence I asked what she thought of the man.

"In some strange way," she said slowly, "he made me think of Zangwill. When I read his books I realize that I do not understand the soul of a Jew. I want to see life from every standpoint — as one born there, sees it. For a second I wanted to be black. I never imagined I should want that. My father used to say there was a strain of Indian blood in us as well as that of other white races, only black — one cannot claim that without a smirch. If I were a negro how I should curse the whites. What galls me though is that any one can feel something I can not — except in my imagination. I can see that man and see what he is feeling but I can not stand where he does while he is feeling it. I am shut out."

I understood everything Mrs. Floyd said though I could never have put it into words as she did. I felt that way myself, still that night when my new

girl came in to ask what we would have for breakfast, I hated her as I had done all of them. I hated that important, you-can't-sit-on-me air with which she tossed her head, her protruding Zulu-like lips, the ridiculous cheap trumpery she wore, her mangy furs, her flaring cheap collars and glass jewelry.

Still I made the utmost efforts to treat her politely. I believe I treated her with more consideration than if she had been a white girl. When she left a few weeks later she told me she knew I disliked her. "Yo 'se so powerful polite — you jes gives it dead away — that you despises me!" she explained.

XXX

THE "VIVID WOMAN"

SPRING wore on into a long, hot summer, still Congress did not adjourn. Jeff was quite happy at Aunt Margaret's. Mrs. Crawford had invited Densie to their country place in Massachusetts where she was having a glorious time. That left Bob and me alone and time began to drag for each of us. It grew intensely hot. There was no escape from the heat in an apartment, I could not even keep green things in the window alive; the sun burned them up. A big rubber plant stayed hale and hearty; only, one rubber plant does not make a summer.

I got up early mornings and did what cooking and cleaning could be finished before breakfast for I had dispensed with servants. After Lemuel left for the House Bob and I generally went to Rock Creek Park for the day.

In shady nooks beside the river it was restful and fairly cool. We ate lunch and read books, played games or rambled about. Bob got into the habit of taking his afternoon nap outdoors, sometimes he slept for hours, while I sewed or wrote letters. We seldom came home till the cool of the evening. I used to dread opening the door and entering our hot rooms. The walls and floors never seemed to cool off. Dur-

ing one intensely hot wave, the nights were awful. Probably it went harder with us than some folks, because at home we had never known an uncomfortable summer.

Most of the congressional families left town early and the men were "baching" in hotels or apartment houses. Lem kept begging me to go home and take the children. I had planned to start in June, then he was suddenly taken sick. For three or four days he lay so ill it frightened me. The doctor insisted that he take better care of himself, that he knock off work earlier in the day, eat light, cool meals and walk.

After he began to mend, I unpacked our trunks and settled down to stay till Congress adjourned. It was easier to stand the heat than the anxiety off in Wolverton, and the fear that Lemuel would not take care of himself. He was dead set against my change of plans. I had never seen him so set about anything, but I stayed.

One day about the end of June we wandered off through an out-of-the-way corner of the park. We had rambled along over a road I never saw before. I followed Bob into all sorts of places after birds and squirrels and flowers and before I realized it we had walked miles. He was tired and up in a grassy hollow of a high bank we sat down to rest. I told him his favorite story about the Three Trolls who lived in a cave of the mountains. Before I reached the big bear, the one adventure in the Troll story which Bob loves best of all, he went to sleep with his curly head dropping over my arm. I sat with him cuddled

to my shoulder watching the sun go down behind the trees and the shadows grow longer. I was trying to think which was the nearest way to Connecticut avenue for I realized we were farther from home than we had ever been before. On the river road below us throngs of people were passing, who were not going afoot as we did. There were sumptuous carriages, with cockaded footmen sitting high on front seats, autos passed with a mad rush and couples on horseback cantered leisurely over the bridle path at the edge of the creek. I sat staring at them with my fingers plucking idly at the cool leaves of myrtle which grew like a mat around us, when I heard Lemuel laugh. I sat up suddenly. Bob turned over as I moved then snuggled sleepily against my breast. I was searching all about; I could see nobody, and yet one can not mistake Lem's big, hearty, infectious laugh. It brings a smile to my lips sometimes even when I do not have the vaguest idea of why I smile. Then I heard his voice. While I waited perplexedly a carriage came around the bend of the road below us. Two people sat in it, my husband and a woman with vividly red hair. She wore a fluffy lavender gown and a small hat from which a long scarf floated out. She was driving leisurely. Lem had taken off his hat and the wind blew the hair back from his forehead. She turned her face to him with a radiant smile; I could see her beautiful teeth. Then she laughed and I listened to her flippant chatter. The wind tossed her scarf across his face; he pushed it away impatiently. The horse was almost sauntering;

I heard their voices after they crossed the stone bridge. The river road stretched on like a narrow white ribbon till it was lost among the trees. I felt as if I had not drawn a breath from the moment I saw them immediately below me, till the carriage disappeared in the distance. I shook out a coat I had beside me as well as I could with one hand and laid Bob on it gently. He opened his eyes for a moment, smiled drowsily, then dropped off to sleep.

I put my elbows on my knees, held my face in my hands and stared down at the throng of wheeled things passing over the river road. I was wondering in a weary, stupid way who the woman could be. I felt certain she was no one we knew in Washington. I caught a glimpse of her face as she turned to Lemuel with her light laugh. It was a vivid face, with coloring as brilliant as that of a wax figure, in a hairdresser's window. Her extraordinary hair was bright as a flame, it lay in a big loose knot upon her neck, the wind caught it in little tendrils and blew it out like her scarf. I sat watching other women, who passed in open carriages. Some were beautiful, but more of them were faded or they had the dull brown hair and ordinary complexion, which nature gives to so many American women. The vivid woman stood out against the majority like a gorgeous pheasant Bob and I stopped to look at in the park aviary. It was a brilliant thing which a painter would have dashed into a picture with cadmium, Indian yellow, orange chrome and crimson lake. We had watched it plume and strut about the cage, trip-

ping aside disdainfully from dull gray and brown hens. Its splendor was almost offensive.

Then quick as a flash I remembered a girl like the Vivid Woman who spent a few years in Wolverton. I knew who the woman was. She had scarcely faded in those twenty-five years. It was Jennie Weston; Lem had been engaged to her when he was twenty. I tried in a quick, miserable, disjointed way to remember all I ever heard about her. She had come from the East to stay with an aunt who lived in Wolverton. I met her once at a church social. Everybody was talking about her that night, because she turned the heads of half the boys in town. She had not a girl friend in the place. She was proud of that; she said she hated women; they were cats.

Then I had heard that Lem was engaged. He had just come home from a little college in Oregon. He was looked upon as a "village beau" in those days. I knew him then simply as an old schoolmate who had gone away for a few years and came back to teach in high school. I got my first school that year. I was working hard and stayed closely at home with mother. Father had just died and she did not recover quickly from the shock. I met Lem in a casual way here and there, but I heard constantly about the dance the Weston girl was leading him. He grew jealous because she flirted with every man who came to town.

One morning she skipped out and Wolverton talked for nine days. She left a note to say she was tired

of waiting for Lem to make something of himself; he would probably be poor to the end of the chapter and she hated poverty. The man she married was a drummer; she had met him three days before at the Wolf's Head. It was told as a joke round town that she went away with Lem's engagement ring. Folks said he took the affair hard. School closed a few weeks later and he went to his grandfather's farm up in the hills. He tells sometimes how he worked that summer,— I 've always thought it did him no end of good, he literally sweated the bad feelings out of him. He came back to his school in the fall. Two years afterwards we got engaged. He has mentioned Jennie Weston three or four times in his life,— more as if it were a funny episode than anything else,— but Lem and I never did thresh out things that happened before we belonged to each other. Nobody ever heard of the girl after she left Wolverton. As I sat there, picking a few pale myrtle blossoms, I felt morally sure that she had come into Lemuel's life again. I began to shiver and my teeth chattered. I stumbled to my feet but I was so stiff and cramped I held on to the trunk of a tree till I could move easily.

Bob lay as sound asleep as if he were in bed. His cheeks were flushed and his yellow curls were tangled into little damp wisps on his forehead. The sun had gone down and a cool wind began to blow up. I felt terribly afraid. It seemed as if we were miles and miles and miles from home — and home — I dreaded to go home. Lemuel would come home! I was not

thinking of how *he* would face *me;* I felt a curious terror of meeting *him.*

I knelt beside little Bob and laid my cheek against his warm face. He wakened cross. He was hungry and began to whimper. I put on my coat, took his hand and led him down the bank. He tripped and fell over a tangle of thick vines. He began to cry and I was in a nervous flutter while I comforted him. I could think of nothing but that Lemuel and the Vivid Woman might pass and find us. I began the story of the Three Trolls again and enticed Bob along till we came to the road. He corrected the story several times, I don't suppose my mind was on it. The bear came into the cave too soon and one troll was missing in a very important adventure. Bob had been carrying a white cotton elephant about all day. It grew grimy with handling; as we sauntered along the dusty road he dropped it and dragged it by the string. Presently it looked as if it had been rescued from a dump heap. The dusk came quickly and I began to be worried because we were in a corner of the park which was strange to me. I stopped a girl who rode leisurely along the bridle path, to ask the nearest way out. She pointed with her whip to the hill in front of us.

"Take that road straight ahead, it will lead you to Connecticut avenue. It's two miles from here, I guess."

"Two miles?" I repeated.

She flicked her horse with the whip and went galloping out of sight along the river bank.

I heard wheels behind us. I drew Bob into the shadow of a tree till the carriage passed. Neither the gathering darkness nor the task of coaxing a tired child home frightened me so much as the thought of being overtaken by my husband and the Vivid Woman.

I took up the story of the Three Trolls again. My imagination began to take fearful leaps. I carried them through adventures which were hair-raising.

"Why, Mother," cried Bob. "Did the trolls go to the bottom of the sea?"

"To the bottom of the sea, the very bottom," I said solemnly.

"And never drowned?"

"They never drowned."

"That 's something I never heard before," he said musingly.

The trolls would not hold out forever and the darkness closed in before we reached the top of the hill, where an avenue of trees had been cut away. I looked down on the city. Its lights glimmered so crystal white they made the darkness look blacker. Bob stumbled on, dragging at my hand, stubbing his toe and crying once in a while. Suddenly he flung himself upon me in an agony of terror. From a near-by cage came the long, piercing yelp of a gray wolf; it aroused a shrieking chorus from all the wild creatures in the zoo. They bellowed and howled as they do in the jungles, in deserted forests, or out on a desolate prairie. I lifted Bob and carried him to a bench beside the road. He clung to my neck sobbing with weariness and terror. Wheels were coming up

the hill and I tried frantically to still him. The carriage stopped close beside us. Somebody jumped out. I heard footsteps but I scarcely dared to look up. I dreaded seeing Lemuel beside me. Somebody spoke. It was an old gentleman with white hair and a kindly face. He lifted Bob and carried him to the barouche, then he helped me in beside him and I accepted his courtesy without a word. I felt that if I did not keep my teeth gritted together as one does when pain stabs the body, tears would come.

As we rode home through lighted streets the child began to chatter gaily. I sat in silence. I wondered while we rushed up in the elevator whether I had thanked the old gentleman as cordially as I ought to have done. I felt dull and shattered and exhausted.

I moved about getting a simple dinner for Bob and myself, then I put him to bed. He dropped to sleep as soon as his head touched the pillow, hugging the grimy, draggled elephant to his breast.

After I washed the dishes I turned out the lights and closed the windows for it had suddenly grown cold. The moon had risen full and silvery; it was lighting up the city. I sat with my elbows on the sill staring out. The green lights in the Government printing office shone as bright as emeralds in a dark setting. A line of lights on the Potomac bridge twinkled like a string of diamonds. A silvery thread, thin as a needle, rose against the sky; on very clear nights in Washington the monument shows like a ghost of itself. Beyond lay the misty gleam of the river and against the horizon was a haze of hills. A steady

beacon burning over the Capitol dome told of a late session. I glanced at the clock. It was half-past eleven. Then I rose and went to the telephone.

"Main 3120," I called.

I waited a second. "Give me Mr. Shipe, please," I said when a voice answered.

I heard a click as the operator rang and I sat waiting. A terror, which seemed to paralyze my thoughts and tongue, seized me suddenly.

"What if I can not speak?" I thought. Then over the wire came my husband's voice, a quick, sharp "hello."

"Lemuel."

"Oh," he cried, "it's you, Pauline. I'm sorry I didn't get home for dinner. Work piled up so I simply couldn't drop it this afternoon. We're in for another late session. Thank God, it's grown cool; aren't you glad?"

"Yes."

"I suppose Bob's in bed. This will be a fine night to sleep. Kiss him for me and you go to bed yourself. I can't tell now when I'll get home. Good night, Polly."

"Good night."

XXXI

LONELINESS

A WEEK later when Densie came back from Massachusetts Lem grew impatient for us to go home. Another hot spell set in and traveling across a continent was not even to be thought of so I put it off for a week. One night cool weather was predicted. Lem came home for dinner that night, set and determined that we start West with the first breath of a cool wave. He had even looked up berths and planned to send off the trunks.

"Yes, I'll see about getting them away," I said. "To-morrow morning if necessary."

He stared at me as if puzzled.

"Them," he repeated. "Who's them, Pauline?"

"I've arranged it all with Densie. She is perfectly able to make the journey alone and to care for Bob. I've written to Margaret. She will meet the children and take them to Fruitlands till we get home."

"And you — what are you going to do?"

Lem bit his lips while he asked the question. A curiously startled look came into his eyes.

"I'm going to stay here — till Congress adjourns."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. You're going home. You're nearer the breaking-down point than any of us. I've seen the heat pulling you down

gradually, week by week. You don't know it, but you 're on the verge of going to smash."

I had been sitting at an open window staring at the eternal tiresome stretch of red brick walls and gray slate roofs. I turned and looked at him.

"It is n't the heat, Lemuel, that is telling on me."

He rose to his feet awkwardly and shot a quick glance at me, walked to the opposite window and stood with his face turned away.

"What is it then?" he muttered.

I did not answer. A strange feeling oppressed me, — I felt lonely, afraid, desolate, in my own home — as bewildered as if I were searching for shelter in some strange city.

"What is it?" repeated Lem.

"I can't tell you," I answered miserably.

He did not ask another question. He clapped his hat on his head and went out. I did not see him again till morning. There was a late session at the House.

The cool wave came before dawn, ushered in by a sweeping tempest from the West. I was waked by an uncanny shriek of the wind through a whistle from the downstairs hall. It had the piercing tone of a siren. I plugged it with a wad of tissue paper and hurried about to shut the windows on the west of the apartment for a hurricane was raging against the house. It lasted for half an hour, then came rain, a sudden lull in the storm and coolness stole into the dark rooms. I threw windows open, went back to bed and dropped into a sound, dreamless sleep.

The next day we took Densie and Bob to the train. While Bob was hugged in his father's arms, I stood with Densie's cheek laid close against my own.

"Mudder — dear little Mudder," the child turned to look into my eyes with tears rolling down her cheeks. "There is n't a thing to worry about for Bob and me, but, oh, Mudder, can't you go home with us?"

I took her face between my hands and looked straight into her brown eyes. For a moment I could not speak.

"Densie, I must stay here with your father. He needs me. I would not do it, except that you can take my place out home with Jeff and Bob. I trust you, Densie dear, I trust you implicitly."

"The train leaves in two minutes," called a passing brakeman.

Densie kissed me, then she turned to her father.

"Dad," I heard her whisper while he held her in his arms for a moment, "Dad, dear, take good care of mother. I 'm trusting her to you, remember."

We stood watching the train while it pulled out for the West. We did not move till there was nothing left but a trail of gray smoke in the distance.

"Come, Pauline," said Lemuel; "let 's go home. You have made a blunder in not leaving with the children."

Home had grown to be an inhospitable, strange isolation, but I lived in it for two weeks, many a day never seeing Lemuel except during the half hour in the morning when I set food before him. The old

comradeship between us had gone. He talked irrelevantly about his work at the House, but it did not interest me, I was weary to death of the affairs of a nation. Letters which came every day from the children and Aunt Margaret made one spot of brightness in the twenty-four hours. During the month that followed I wrote longer letters than I had ever done in my life before. It seems astonishing how I found anything to write letters about, life was absolutely empty of news. Densie showed me one of those old letters lately. We laughed over it; I had spun out a story that covered pages about a pigeon which grew so tame it came in at the dining-room window to eat crumbs. Life was made up of little things no bigger than that. Thank God! I had a house to keep clean, a few scant meals to cook and occasionally I sewed. I tried to read. It was hard to fasten my thoughts upon a book because constantly, between me and the pages came that brief, lightning-like glimpse of the Vivid Woman and my husband. To-day as I look back on that spell of loneliness I wonder how I lived through it. The only thing that saved me was the feeling when I got up in the morning, that before night, something might happen to straighten out the affair.

I never mentioned Jennie Weston to my husband.

Lemuel was not at peace with himself. He was living steadily on his guard, fearing lest I see something suspicious about him. He was moody, easily irritated at little things, nervous, occasionally it seemed to me he was wretchedly unhappy. He grew

pale and began to lose flesh. When we were together he was on pins and needles. Many a night he did not come home till after twelve. I knew he did not spend all the time in his office because occasionally his secretary 'phoned to ask if he was at home.

One night he came in early, in time for dinner. He took off his shoes and set them away to dry. They were clogged with red clay as if he had plodded over country roads. I said nothing about it, only I felt light of heart. I knew that a cross-country tramp would not appeal to the Vivid Woman as an enticing junket.

That night I lay wide awake till the dawn crept in like a thin, gray streak. Lem slept heavily, I could hear him breathing in the next room. He has a capacity for dropping to sleep almost as soon as his head touches the pillow, like a drowsy, innocent child. All night, while I stared into the darkness, I was treading in my thoughts every step of my life from childhood, not as they say a drowning man does, in one lucid flash, but slowly and deliberately as if I were hard at study on something which had to be memorized.

I kept asking myself if I were jealous, that might be what caused the numb, steady ache in my heart. One day Densie wanted a definite interpretation of jealousy and I had looked it up for her. I read, "We are jealous when we suspect one of aiming to deprive us of what is our own and what we dearly prize." Somehow I did not forget that sentence. I loathed the thought of jealousy. I had known jealous women, suspicious, cat-eyed, jaundiced creatures for

whom I had no pity. I hated to think myself in that class, still, unless wise old Noah Webster had blundered, I was jealous.

I thought I had known Lemuel so intimately, all his small weaknesses, his strength, his ability, even his limitations. I had always imagined myself singularly lucky. Many a woman to whom life was sadness and a problem had told me I did not realize how blessed I was. Lemuel did not drink, he was honest, ambitious, clean-minded. The thought had never occurred to me of another woman coming into his life.

Perhaps the reason I took it so quietly was because the situation came upon me like a lightning stroke. Besides, while the children were about us, I could not stir up things, and before they left I had fallen into a habit of tranquil calm which puzzled me. Lemuel was having a worse time than I was, of that I felt certain. His cross-country tramp was one of the symptoms. I suspected he was tiring of the woman.

I began to analyze myself and my feelings, something I had never done in my life before. I am not analytical in the slightest degree; life has always been too busy to allow such a pastime, but I certainly had a spell of it during those solitary weeks.

Noah Webster defined Lemuel for me as "something I prized dearly." At twenty, as a bride, I should have scorned such an explanation as cold and Quakerish. When I married Lemuel and during the first few months of absolute, shut-eyed content, I thought him perfect and myself "blessed among women." When one chooses a husband dispassion-

ately, from a commercial standpoint, or as some women do, because he seems to be the best thing on the horizon and the only thing in sight, there is no blossom-strewn lane on life's highway to remember — or forget,— as you choose to have it. I had stepped among the blossoms with a tremulous wonder because they were so many and so fragrant, and I had been happy, with the light-heartedness of a child.

I followed my life step by step, lingering over the memory of how Lemuel used to stride into the empty schoolroom late in the afternoon, when the children had gone home, then stoop to kiss me, not once but half a dozen times. Afterwards he tossed the heap of blotted, slovenly little examination papers into a drawer and stood there waiting till I put on my hat and coat. He was the one to lock the schoolroom door. I used to laugh at his threat that the day was coming when he would turn the key in the lock for the last time. There was a short way home through Burnham's meadow and except in the dead of winter or in the muddy spring we never took the Gravel road. We had to climb fences and cross a tumble-down foot-bridge over Duck Creek, which swayed when we stepped on it. Beyond, we climbed a steep bank where the school children and sheep had trodden narrow paths. That led us into the woods where we waded through verdant brush and sweet fern, then across a field to the orchard. If the back door stood open we could smell the bacon which mother was frying for supper.

One day seemed to thrust itself into my memory

insistently, time and again; it was the evening when Densie was born. I have a recollection of lying in the small chamber off the parlor, drowsy and tired, with heavy eyelids and a languid feeling that now I knew the meaning of eternal rest. A little warm head was snuggling close to my breast and I held in my hand a baby hand, so tiny that I wondered anything so small could be alive. The door opened. I heard mother whisper "hush,"— then Lem tip-toed across the room and dropped on his knees beside the bed. He put his hand under the blanket and found my hand clasped about the pink fingers which looked like a half-open chrysanthemum bud. He folded both his hands about ours tenderly, and bent over to kiss me. I felt the tears come with a hot rush to my eyes. In a shaft of light from a lamp in the hall I saw his face, while he turned down the sheet to search for the baby head pillowed on my arm. He did not speak or even touch Densie. Once he put out a finger as if he would lay it on her cheek, then he paused afraid of disturbing her quiet slumber.

For days after that he hovered about the child and me with as solemn devotion as a good Catholic feels for the Virgin with the baby in her arms. The sanctified mood wore off. It would have been dreadful for any woman with the slightest sense of humor if it had lasted,— and Lem soon became robustly human. I do not remember any high-altar attitudes when Jeff or Bob came, although Lemuel was constantly a kind father and husband. As the years went past he and I had settled down to be stanch

good friends, with common interests in life, common likes and dislikes, but above all, the love of our children to keep us bound closely together.

I think it was that very "love of children" which gave me the most gripping shock when I saw him vanish out of sight, laughing and jesting with the Vivid Woman. I don't believe I thought of disloyalty to myself so much as of his fealty to the children. I wondered how he could clasp Densie in his arms after touching that painted travesty.

Occasionally I determined to shake off worrying thoughts and went searching for amusement. There were several stock companies in town. I became a matinee-goer and sat through a series of romantic plays which were amusing because they were so untrue to life. I spent one day on a boat which sailed slowly between the flat shores of the Potomac. I visited Mount Vernon again and left the mob of excursionists to lie perfectly listless for hours in a sunny nook where ivy made a cool green bed. There was nobody in the city I knew; it seemed absolutely deserted except by negroes, department clerks, business men, the congressmen and senators who were tied down by duty and languid, pale-faced girls behind the counter in deserted stores.

XXXII

A PACKAGE OF LETTERS

I SAT writing my daily letter to the children one afternoon when the doorbell rang. It was a messenger boy with a small package. I signed the receipt for it and let him go, then I carried the parcel to my desk. I had imagined in the dim hall that it was something for Lemuel till I saw my name scrawled upon it, in tall, florid writing. I undid the string slowly, wondering what it was. When I took off the paper, I found a bundle of letters, tied together tightly with a purple ribbon. On the knot was dropped a big untidy splotch of purple sealing wax. Under it on a card was written in the same flashy penmanship, "To be opened by no one except Mrs. Pauline Shipe." I turned the bundle over. I read upon an envelope at the bottom an address in my husband's writing:

Mrs. Jennie Dodsworth,
626 28th Street, N. W.
City.

I flung it on the desk as if it were a contagious thing and dropped into a chair, staring at my unfinished letter which lay upon the blotter. I put my fingers over my eyes and sat for a minute in darkness,

numb and stupid with a dull ache at my heart. God! I had never known before how a woman's heart could ache! My brain kept repeating that cut-and-dried definition of Noah Webster's: "We are jealous when we suspect one of aiming to deprive us of what is our own and what we dearly prize."

I wondered stupidly if I did prize Lemuel dearly or if the hurt rankled so merely because he was my own. I had borne his children, worked to help keep a roof over our heads, I had been a partner during hard times, toiled till my hands grew rough and red and knotted; we had shared mutual happiness, mutual sorrows, surely that made him "my own."

I did not think of breaking the seal on that bundle of letters. I shrank from even touching them. I had never received a love letter in my life from Lemuel, we had seen each other every day through our brief courtship. I turned away with a cold shiver at the thought of reading love letters he had written to another woman. I carried them into his room and buried them in a bureau drawer beneath his collars. Then I went back to the desk, wrote "Your Loving Mother" at the end of my letter to the children, stamped it and dropped it down the mail chute.

Work was the only thing that looked like relief. I thought of walking, but after one glance into the sun-beaten street I laid my hat aside and sat down by the window with a basket of stockings which I had put aside to darn during leisure minutes. The first I thrust my hand into was a long heavy stocking of

little Bob's. All the holes were in the knees. I remembered the day those holes were made. We had taken a car out to the country, I followed him up brush-grown banks and through a tangle of weeds, till I was breathless. We came home through quiet streets to hide his tatters.

I buried my face in the little stocking and the tears came, such tears as we shed only at rare intervals in life; thank God for that. If my heart were wrung many times as it was that day I should grow so callous that tears would be no relief. When it was over I was left with nothing but the mute ache which comes to a woman over the sense of desertion for some light, leech of a creature. At six o'clock I had not thought of a meal; food would have choked me and Lem had been dining at the House restaurant for weeks so I never thought of preparing dinner for him. As soon as the sun went down, a faint whiff of cooler wind came blowing through the house. I latched the door and went to the roof, telling the elevator boy where I was.

A few women sat about listlessly on benches, I did not know any of them. There was an empty chair in the corner beside a chimney which screened it from the throng. I sat there for a while, then as the lights began to gleam through the city, I rose and stood looking out across the low parapet. Beyond the Maryland hills summer lightning flashed steadily. Sometimes it came like a glaring sheet and lit up the Potomac till I could see white-sailed boats scudding across the still water. Down in the street a hand-organ was playing.

It went the rounds night after night; I had grown so accustomed to it I knew every tune in its repertoire. It was playing "Lead, Kindly Light," with a crash of cymbals at the end of each verse. After a moment's pause came "Sally in our Alley." I used to sing it to an accompaniment on the old melodeon when I was a girl, and the words went crooning through my head to the music:

> Of all the girls that are so smart
> There's none like pretty Sally,
> She is the darling of my heart
> And she lives in our alley.
> There is no lady in the land
> Is half so sweet as Sally.

I turned with a start. Lemuel had laid his hands on my shoulders.

"Polly," he said, "I'm a brute to leave you like this; you're lonesome."

I shrank away from him and went back to the chair beside the chimney. He followed me. I was trembling and I kept wishing he would not speak to me again. I was afraid I could not steady my voice to answer. He left me and began his nervous walk up and down across the graveled roof. Suddenly he wheeled around and a few swift steps brought him close to me. He stood looking down into my eyes through the dim haze that is made by a city's electric light.

"Pauline." I wondered for a moment at how little embarrassment he showed; I did not know how

much he was feeling. "I came home early because there 's something I want to thresh out to-night. Did you get a package from — did — a messenger bring you anything?"

I nodded and looked at him gravely from head to foot.

"When?" he asked abruptly.

"Several hours ago."

"Then," his face looked inert except for his eyes, "then I suppose there is nothing left for me to explain."

"It seems to me — Lem — there is a good deal to explain."

"Not if you have read those letters."

"I have n't read those letters."

"You have n't read — those letters?" There was a note of astonishment in his voice which was almost incredulity. "Why?"

"Because I don't even want to touch them — they were not written to me."

He looked at me with steady eyes. "Polly, will you come downstairs, I can't talk here. Somebody may come on the scene any minute."

I followed him down the stairs. He opened the door with his latch-key and I walked into the sitting-room.

"Don't light up," I pleaded as he reached out to press the electric knob. "I would rather talk in the dark."

He paused for a moment. The light from the street shone on his face. I was in the shadow.

"I 've got to turn on the light. I want you to read those letters."

"Lemuel — please — don't ask me to do that — please, don't."

"Most women would have known every line in them by heart before this time."

"I don't know what most women would have done — I don't want to lay a finger on them."

"Polly, I want fair, square judgment first of all from you and then — if it has to come — from others."

"From others," I repeated. "Who?"

"Oh, I don't know." He spoke impatiently. "Where are those letters?"

"In your top bureau drawer, below your collars." I nodded in the direction of his bedroom.

He came back in a few moments with the bundle in his hand. He pulled another package from his pocket and laid them both on the table in front of me.

"A court always accords a man fair judgment. God knows I never dreamed of my wife sitting in judgment on me, but you are my judge now and you can hand out the verdict. I 'm not asking for mercy — or any damned thing except — fair play. You 'll give me that, Pauline?" his voice broke.

"Lemuel!" I cried. "I don't want to sit in judgment on you."

"You 've got to. It 's the only thing — it 's fair to you — and fair to me. There 's worse men in the world than I am — and better."

I listened in perfect silence.

"First of all, you 've got to know who the woman is. She —"

"I know — I 've seen her."

"Seen her — God! She 'phoned me she sent a messenger. Did she dare — to come here — herself with these letters?"

"No. I saw her — with you driving in the park."

Lemuel sat immovable. "When?" he asked in a whisper.

"Oh, long ago." I tried listlessly to place the date. "I can't remember. It was during that hot spell we had in June."

"And you knew then who — she was? She told me she did n't remember ever having seen you — till a week ago."

"I did not see her — a week ago."

"She saw you at the theater — somebody pointed you out to her."

"Oh!" I breathed.

There was a long silence. Lemuel broke it first. He rose, turned on the light, and tore at the purple ribbon which tied his letters together. Then he unwrapped the others and laid them loose on the table by my elbow.

"These are hers," he explained. "Heaven knows why I saved them. It was n't because I valued them. I 'm glad now I did. Pauline," he pleaded, "you *must* read them — every one of them. It 's simply justice to both of us."

I began to read the one he handed me. It was the first one he received from her. I almost smiled as I glanced at the narrow black-edged paper.

"She 's a widow?"

"Of course," answered Lem sharply.

"She reached the lavender-bordered stage in a week?"

He did not speak.

Before I finished that flippant letter the awful burden of unhappiness seemed to roll away. Seeing the funny side of life has saved me more than once and when the Vivid Woman switched suddenly from black-bordered to lavender stationery she degenerated into a mere absurd frippery.

From the first letter I learned how cheap a middle-aged bit of feminine scum can hold herself. She flaunted her well-preserved charms in my husband's face, trying to piece together an image of the trivial thing he made love to in his callow days. I read the letters with a mingling of contempt, disgust and loathing. Then her guilt came to me like a sudden horror — the fact that a woman who had passed forty, the mother of two children, was capable of holding herself so cheap as to become offensive.

I looked once at Lemuel, marveling what there was in such a letter to appeal to any man. He did not see me; he sat staring out at the window with tightly compressed lips and a grim look on his face.

She said she had never cared for any man but Lemuel; she had held him in loving memory through

all her married life. She had almost fainted when she sat in the House gallery during her first visit to Washington and saw him rise to speak. She did not know before that he had been elected to Congress. She could not leave the city till she saw him; would he call upon her? I spent an hour reading one letter after another, each was an answer to the one which had gone before.

I suppose there was a certain relief in knowing that Lemuel had not sunk so low as he might have done, for the temptation the Vivid Woman set forth was ample enough. She flattered him with cheap incense and honeyed phrases, then made a bold effort to fan into flame the esteem she had once held so cheap. I could trace where her adulation struck in, then — he began to weary of her. I could see him grow cautious, cold, disenchanted and distant. When he held her off at arms' length, she leaped at him with her heart upon her sleeve. He was trying with as much self-respect as he could summon to drop her; he spoke of his good name, of his family, of me, of his position as a representative but she scoffed at his conscience-stricken moods. Then she turned to blackmail. Her demands grew imperative and the money she claimed was no small sum. Lem's answers were curt and frigid; they became a haughty repulse. She bombarded him with requests for money or a visit, sometimes he received half a dozen letters in one day, bearing special delivery stamps. Then he ceased to write. She threatened to come and see me. She swore she would write to his sister Margaret whom

she had once known or to Densie. But Lem kept silence.

As I read the last letter a shivering fit stole over me, dulling my brain, making my fingers tremble, and chilling the place where my heart had been beating. I remember clearly to-day one sentence — only one — in that letter; it was a quotation from some novel the woman had been reading. "Is there anything on God's earth so dull as the face of the wife a man has tired of?" She explained she had seen me at the theater and now she had no feeling left for Lemuel except pity!

I dropped the letter as if it were an infected thing, went into my own room and shut the door. I do not know how long I lay there with my face pressed into a pillow. I was wondering why I minded it so much. It was not a blow to my vanity — I know my own failings well — but I had never been vain. What she said really counted for nothing. I knew I was growing old; that gray hairs were coming fast, not showing, as they did once, silvery against dark hair, but with a stray thread of brown against the silver. The pink and white we call a complexion had vanished years ago. I had no comeliness of figure, and my hands were the hands of a woman who had done hard work. Still in some nethermost, hitherto unexplored corner of myself, there *must* have existed some frail shred of vanity which received its death blow at those words.

I had never been a praying woman although I belonged all my life to a church and fulfilled church du-

ties. Suddenly I wished I could pray. I had often seen mother rise from her knees with a happy calm on her face that must have come from some mysterious source. I wondered what I could pray for, then I ceased to think of the Almighty. I could not insult Him with a whimper about gray hair and a faded complexion, "a face so dull that a husband had tired of it."

I heard the door open softly. Lemuel came in through the darkness and seated himself on the edge of the bed. He groped about till he found my hand and clasped it warmly between his own. He did not speak for a long time.

"Pauline," he said at last, "that damned, devilish, brutal thing she said was the last straw for me also. Are you listening?" he asked after a pause. I gripped his fingers in response. "I had not answered one of those letters during two weeks till I wrote to-day. I sent my secretary home and locked the door. I made a copy of the letter, I fancied I might need it. Showing it to you won't make things any cleaner or exonerate me or do any good so far as I know, only I want you to know there is *some* decency left in me. It brought me to my feet — because I believe in justice. I know I deserve to lose you and the children — and everything. I think I must have gone through a period of insanity to have even laid an eye on that painted flirt. I loathe a man when he humbugs around — pleading to be forgiven. I can't do it — I simply can't, Pauline. Anyway I'm not sure of myself. I would have sworn a year ago

that a thing like this could n't have happened — so what 's the use of promises." He paused for a moment — then began again slowly. " She 'phoned this afternoon that she had sent you my letters. I went to see her. I knew she would not send the last one I wrote. I made her give it up. I threatened to have her arrested for blackmail. She stood in the doorway with the sun pouring down on her. Polly — you need n't hold on to hard feelings against her — I had only one thought — as I looked at her. A creature dyed and bleached and painted as she is — must be an affront to the Almighty."

There was a long silence then he laid his hand upon my cheek.

" Polly — won't you give me a chance? Won't you read the last letter I sent to her? I can't put it into so many words what you have stood for to me — during twenty-two years. Won't you read the letter? "

The light dazzled my eyes for a minute when I went back to the sitting-room. Lem handed me two letters. One was in an envelope addressed to her. She had received it that morning. The other was a folded sheet in one of his franked envelopes. One letter, as he said, was a copy of the other. I have it now — the copied letter — the other we burned. It is laid away in a drawer where I keep a few treasures. It is a letter I could never set down here in black and white. Lemuel's pride, satisfaction and self-esteem had gone down before that cruel quotation. He simply set himself to answer one question: " What would I have been if it had not been for my wife? "

It was not an acknowledgment, or tribute or anything prostrate, like kissing the hem of a garment. My husband had merely sloughed off every rag of egotism that ever fluttered from him and set a halo about my brow.

I read the letter to the last sentence, folded it, pressed it close to my heart and turned to him. He was not looking at me. He stood staring down at the gleaming city. I crossed the room and stood beside him.

"Lemuel," I whispered.

He took me into his arms. I do not know how long we stood there in the quiet darkness. Moments occur in middle-aged married lives beside which the novelist's dream of youthful passion is a wan, threadbare phantom.

XXXIII

THE SPEAKER'S PARTY

IT was late in the summer before we got home and almost immediately Lemuel started to look after his "fences." We were left alone. Densie and I sat one afternoon under the apple trees; she read aloud while I lay in the hammock with little Bob cuddled on my arm sound asleep. The gate by the road clanged shut and Johnnie Wirt came running up the path with a telegram. Once upon a time a yellow envelope used to make me so scared I could hardly open it, but a congressman's wife gets over that. Telegrams had grown as common with us as letters. Many a night in Washington I ran downstairs to answer the doorbell when everybody in the house was asleep. Through the curtain I could see an impatient little messenger with his finger ready to press the button again. Generally I opened the envelope and waked Lem or not, just as it seemed necessary. If it was from somebody eager for news about a postoffice or a pension, I let him sleep till morning.

Densie took Johnnie into the house to fill his pockets with cookies, while I opened the telegram. It was addressed to Lemuel and signed by the speaker's secretary. He said the congressional party that was on

a trip through the West planned to stop at six the next morning and spend the day in Wolverton.

"Any answer, Mrs. Shipe?" asked Johnnie, while I sat thinking what I ought to do.

"No," I said at first, then I called him back before he reached the gate and sent a message to Lem, addressing it to Panola, though I did n't feel sure of his being there.

"What can we do?" I said to Densie. "There 's no chance of the wire catching your father so he can meet them."

"Who's coming?" she asked.

"A big party, I reckon. I read in the *Herald* the other day about the crowd. They 've been West, on a river and harbor inspection, and most of the congressmen have their wives along. Somebody must go to the station and take them to the hotel for breakfast. The mayor and his family are at the lake, Judge Thynne is away, the Deckers would be tickled to death to have them, so would the Beechers, only, it seems to be your father's job. They wired him, you see."

"Why can't we bring them up here?" asked Densie eagerly.

"To-morrow morning, child; how could we feed them all? How could we get them up here, twenty of them, perhaps?"

"We can do it, Mother, easily; I know we can. Jeff and I will work all night; I 'd do anything for the dear old speaker."

We did not tell the news in Wolverton, though down

at the Wolf's Head they asked Jeff curiously why he wanted the big carryall to meet the 6.45 train. It was long after midnight before Densie and I went to bed. A breakfast for twenty people, when you get it up in a hurry, takes thought as well as work. We let one woman into the secret, Mrs. Millard, our pastor's wife. She and Sophie, who is Densie's closest friend, came over and helped. As long as they live I guess the Millards will think that was the event of their lives.

We debated what to have for breakfast. Mrs. Millard thought it ought to be steak or lamb chops or fish of some kind.

"No; let 's give them country victuals," I decided. "They set steak and chops under your nose every morning in Washington. The speaker was country born and country raised, so were a few of the congressmen with him. Even if they were n't, a country breakfast will taste pretty good to them after the dining-car diet they 've had for weeks."

I have never described our little home in Wolverton. You step off the porch into a hall so long and so wide, it leaves little space for the parlor and bedrooms on each side of it. It was father's idea having a great hall. He always said he wanted to feel the wind blowing straight through the house. If you were to look in at the front door through the kitchen you could see lilac bushes growing round the back door. From the kitchen you catch a glimpse of roses blooming in the front yard. Mother used to worry about having little rooms and wasting so much space

in the hall. She was forever talking, after father died, about changing the house over. She never did it though. It would have cost considerable money; then I used to think she had n't the heart to do it. Father loved so to sit in his big chair with both doors open where he could look out on the old place, back and front. The floor is covered with hit-and-miss rag carpet and there are old-fashioned pictures hung around. We always eat there in the summer, only it does not look like a dining-room because we keep the folding-table set against the wall, with a cover over it.

The morning the speaker's party came, I was thankful enough to have that great space in the heart of the house. We set three long tables together, and what I did n't have in linen and dishes or silver we brought over from the parsonage. We were up at daylight, for I had raised biscuits to bake and lots of other things to do. Mrs. Millard and Sophie came in when the clock was striking five. The girls set the table while we worked in the kitchen. I never saw anything look pleasanter or more inviting than that long table. Out in a corner of the orchard the wild lilies were in bloom which are as red as a cactus and Sophie filled clear glass bowls with them. The morning sun shone in making the tumblers sparkle like cut glass, and there was something real homelike about our old-fashioned, dark blue dishes.

"Come, girls, it 's time to start," cried the parson, who took Lem's place in welcoming the party. Sophie ran to the mirror to pin on her Sunday hat.

"Do you know what I 'd wear if I were you girls?" I suggested.

"What?" they both asked.

"Your sunbonnets."

"Sunbonnets?"

"Yes, we 're plain, country folks here. We 're offering the company a country welcome and a country breakfast. Those men and women from the fashionable world of the East can see a flowered hat every day of their lives. Rosy faces inside crisp sunbonnets would look good to them."

"I vote for sunbonnets too," said the parson.

The girls laid aside the flowered hats doubtfully, then they climbed into the wide democrat behind the parson and Jeff.

We were pretty busy for the next half hour. The oven was full and there was hardly room on top of the crowded stove for two big coffee pots.

We knew by an eager shout when the congressional party was sighted at the top of the hill. Bob and Timmie Marshall were perched like eager sentries on a fence post. When the crowd came thronging through the gate, Mrs. Millard clutched my arm nervously.

"Pauline, I could cut and run," she whispered. "I don't know how to act. My! do you know we 've both got on our aprons?"

"Keep them on," I advised with a laugh. "We 'll need them presently."

Then I ran down the steps to meet the speaker. There was a radiant smile on his rosy face and a twinkle in his blue eyes. He looked almost boyish.

"Mrs. Shipe," he clasped my hand in a hearty grip, "you 're giving us the sort of blowout I 've been wishing for all the way across the continent. We 've been feasted at big hotels and splendid mansions, we 've been banqueted and listened to speeches till it 's an old story, but this! Bless my soul! Dear madam," he cried as he stepped into the hall, "you must have been up all night cooking. This is a reception worth while!"

If any of the women in the party started from the East with society airs or graces, they dropped them that day. In the most blasé, frivolous woman or world-worn man, there is something, I cannot tell what, it may be the original close relationship to Mother Earth, which dashes all the trumpery nonsense out of their souls, making them simple and real when they get where the frills are stripped off life. Still there were only two or three in that party who needed such a restorative.

We Americans have so few generations between us and pioneer forefathers that the husks slip off quickly. After the women had washed away travel dirt they came trooping out to the low, white-washed kitchen, following a coffee odor. I had one picturesque glimpse at the speaker when I stepped to the back door. Jeff and Timmie fairly ecstatic with glee were pumping water into a tin basin in which he washed his face with a noisy splutter.

"Bless my soul, boys," I heard him cry, "I feel as young as you do. A marble bowl and silver faucets are n't in it with the old pump and a tin basin."

The party trooped into breakfast radiant and hungry. I had guessed at their tastes but I had hardly reckoned on their appetites. The parson took Lem's chair while Mrs. Millard, the girls and I waited on the table. Big platters of corn-beef hash, ham and eggs, johnny-cake, biscuits, creamed potatoes, sausage and buckwheats disappeared like magic. They said they had never breakfasted in a pleasanter place. It was one of those mornings when the warm sunshine seemed to draw out pleasant odors from the still country, and they were wafted on soft gusts of wind through the hall. There was the spicy smell of ripe apples, the scent of sweet peas and the aromatic perfume of nasturtiums, while away down in the meadow by Duck Creek, a band of hayers were tossing over the last crop of the summer.

I realized what a moment's lull in the month of travel meant to those people. I know how welcome wide fields, posy beds and the shadow of trees seemed to us after shrieking whistles, smoke, dirt and the grinding roar of wheels.

The speaker was on his feet after breakfast, making a courtly speech to his hostesses, when Lem, flushed and mud-spattered came dashing up the porch steps.

"Why, Mr. Speaker, and gentleman," he cried, "nobody ever went out to look after his fences at such an unfortunate time as I did. I 've ridden half the night, still I was too late to meet you."

"Go back to your fences, my boy, with an easy mind," said the speaker, and he patted Lem's shoulder. "I 'm almost in favor of giving woman suffrage, if

we could send ladies like my hostess to Congress."

"You 've made some good new friends for next season, Polly," said Lem when he came back from the station after seeing the congressional party away.

Through that busy day such a thought had never entered my head; Lem was right, however. When we went East in the fall to live in an apartment, I found among some of the people who spent that day with us in Wolverton not only hearty friends, but they took us into a new circle where there were folks worth knowing.

XXXIV

THE LAST CAMPAIGN

LEMUEL faced his last campaign in an entirely different spirit from any he had ever shown. During the first campaign he pitched in with a sort of I-can't-believe-it 's-true feeling. It was really an astonishing stroke of luck, for the nomination might have swung in the way of a dozen men quite as capable as Lemuel. He plugged along, working for himself, with the amazed feeling still on him, till they began to pile calumny on his head. Lemuel comes of fighting stock, and when he got heated up, the blood certainly showed five years ago. In the second campaign he faced considerable of a scare. We had spent a year in Washington then, he loved the work, and he was bound he would go back, so he fought tooth and nail. As soon as the suffrage situation eased up it was fairly calm sailing, and yet we saw the signs of a district's disposition in his smaller majority. Somehow Lem forgot any warning the figures gave, and when we went home in July he jumped into his campaign with a cocksure air.

Before we left Washington the very air reeked of insurgency. Men who for years had been good friends, began to get on different sides of the fence and lined up against each other. Insurgency came

out in the disposition of the women — there were nasty little scraps among them and sometimes they had it in for each other. Of course it was in a picayune way. Sometimes a hostess, whose husband was a regular, skipped the wives of insurgents when she sent out cards for a reception which usually would have been a free-for-all affair. On the way home we could not get away from insurgency. We rode through States where the atmosphere was full of it, we heard men on the cars threshing it out, indeed, through the whole Middle West the flag of insurgency flapped vigorously.

When we got into Wolverton the atmosphere cleared up. Most of the men in Lem's district were farmers and the spell of prosperity during late years gave them an idea that it was best to let well-enough alone. Consequently, insurgency was not put up to Lem. He would not have insurged if he had been faced with it because it was against every belief he held. He would rather have lost, for when his conscience is marched face to face with a temptation as it was in the District affair, something, I don't know what, makes him keep faith with his moral sense.

Not only was there no insurgency in the second district, but there was no Republican in the field who made more than a flash in the pan for the nomination. Hartley Allen managed the campaign. He was a fairly good man but he did not compare with Brett. Brett was a good mixer, he was integrity itself; besides, he had been born and raised in Wolverton. All his interests are there and he swore by our State, district and town, as finer than any other spot on the map.

Allen was something of a high-brow. He was rich and he had spells of junketing off with his family abroad or through America, when they got tired of Wolverton. That sort of thing does not pay in a little town. Besides, he never had Brett's Indian faculty for laying his ear to the ground to listen for signs of what was coming. He hushed Lem's misgivings whenever things looked doubtful and the campaign was a tame one. Once in two years the West enjoys beyond anything being waked up to politics with a hip-hip-hoorah, and folks missed it that fall. Less money was spent, fewer banners were strung across Main street and when he came in from a speaking trip, Lem had a well-groomed, clean-shaven, shoe-polished look that was a decided contrast to the time when he went bedraggled, unshaved and disheveled for days at a stretch.

Major Holbrook, the Democratic candidate, was a pretty good citizen. He had a war record, that generally counts, still at first it looked as if he were making a poor campaign. He went mogging over the district in a ramshackle old buckboard, talking to folks face to face, like one man to another. Lem said he would n't do that cracker-barrel oratory even if he lost his job. It was n't oratory with the major; he 'd drive up to a cross-roads store, all alone, and cry "Hello, there, Boys," to the dozen or two men who sat about waiting for the mail. He 'd order cigars and hand them round, then he 'd begin.

"You all know me, boys, and you know what I stand for. I 'm not sure what your feelin's are about

sendin' me to Washington but I 'm willin' to find out. Let 's talk it over. You know I 'm no hand to orate. You ask questions, I 'll answer as well as I know how."

Then he 'd get into the middle of them, sitting round on molasses barrels or breakfast-food boxes and they 'd fire questions at him. Sometimes he 'd answer them out of his head but oftener out of the Democratic text-book. He would promise anything above ground that they felt moved to ask for, cheaper food, better freight rates, good roads, pensions, public buildings and bigger prices for their crops. Lem never made easy promises as the major did; he knew he could not always fulfil them. Along, later in the campaign, the major seemed to have money, or rather the Democrats did, and in other campaigns they had been poor as Job's turkey.

One day Uncle Si Marks came wandering in with his genial smile. Lem was away campaigning but I made the old man stay for dinner. When the children left for school he came out to sit on the porch with me and talk.

"Want to go back to Washington, Pauline?" he asked as he sprawled out on the settle.

"Lem's got his heart set on it," I said.

He looked at me with a twinkle in his blue eyes. "That wan't what I asked, Polly."

I laughed. "Nobody can fool you, Uncle Si. I 'm not hankering to go back, but I reckon it would break Lem's heart if he was defeated."

Uncle Si braced straight up.

"Well, then, we 'd better see to it that he gets

elected. Only, he can't afford to be givin' his tongue a vacation. If he does, Major Holbrook 'll have him skinned to a standstill."

I looked at him anxiously.

"Uncle Si, I've been thinking that sort of thing myself."

"Holbrook's been up over the mountain for two days — not campaignin' exactly — but settin' back on cracker barrels — havin' a sort of question-and-answer campaign. And it's takin', Pauline. Oh, I hear them talk! Besides he's handin' out ten-cent cigars. He buys out all the stock there is at a little store, then he sets round, smokin' and talkin' slick."

"Where does the money come from?"

"That beats me."

"The major has n't much of anything."

"I know that. He's never had. Now he's sweatin' money."

"It's queer."

"It's uncommon queer. But," he spoke solemnly as he rose to take his leave, "you warn Lem. Tell him from me that no one has a corner on political luck in this country."

I did tell Lem but it made little impression. He went around making fine oratorial speeches at the Chautauquas, at fall fairs and before college students but he was skipping the common people as he had not done in the last two campaigns. When he did get them together, he talked over their heads. I listened to one speech he made on Peace, at a church picnic. I watched the people while they listened. Not one in

ten had the slightest conception what he was talking about. I told him so while we were driving home.

"Wolverton is n't ready for high-brow problems," I said; "it won't stand for them."

He flushed.

"You don't suppose I 'm going to truckle to every yip in the district by sending him a peck of government turnip seed? I 'd rather lose." Then he flung back his head and his lips were closed in a line of grim resolution.

Nobody ever had a stancher friend during a political campaign than William Deering proved. The *Gazette* stood by Lemuel through thick and thin in everything. There is a "Don't give a whoop" style about Deering's editorials that Wolverton pins faith to. Old Muldoon at Turtle Creek had never forgiven me for putting his wife down, so he came out with a scurrilous attack on Lem. Deering handled him without gloves. Wolverton sat back and cheered for Muldoon backed off like a crawfish.

Just the same Lem took things easy. Wolverton was so friendly to us he seemed to forget there was anything to look after but Wolverton. He laughed when I urged him to get out and fight.

"Why, Polly, you 're as bad as Deering," he asserted. "I found him in a blue funk yesterday. I 'm trusting to Allen, he knows the signs; he says I 've a dead sure thing with a big majority waiting me. Why, this is only the beginning of September, a month from now I 'll tap our enthusiasm and wake them

up with drum and trumpet. Don't you get scared, little woman."

I sat back after that time and let the drum and trumpet campaign take its course. Before November arrived I too began to think everything was all right. Election night Deering put up a great show at the opera house. When the congressional committee heard of it they offered to pay the bills.

"No, siree," said the editor, "there 's neither graft nor favor in this circus. Lem Shipe and I went to school together, we farmed together when he and I worked for his grandfather. This is my show, and the *Gazette*'s paying the bills."

The only admittance needed that night at the theater was a coupon clipped from the front page of the *Gazette*. Everybody was invited. A good entertainment was promised and returns were to be flashed on a screen between numbers in the concert or shifts in a magic-lantern show.

Wolverton's opera house is nothing very gorgeous if you compare it with a city theater. It was built twelve years ago. Its red plush curtains have faded to a squelched old-rose tone to-day. Its gold decorations are badly tarnished and the drop curtain is not what would be called artistic in the East. Still, a few thousand people in Wolverton feel proud of the opera house, very proud, and they have had good times under its roof. One of those good times was last election night.

There are only two boxes in the house. We were invited to occupy one of them. We packed in all the

chairs the box would hold and the Millards sat with us. One the other side of the house was Mrs. Deering with her children, also old Lawyer Marshall who came over in a wheeled chair. Election in Wolverton is looked on as a holiday, for farmers knock off work when they come into town to vote. It would not have occurred to them to go home when a free show was on, so the house was packed from the front row of the orchestra to the last seat in the peanut gallery. I watched them flock in, for we got there early, and the way folks divided up was curious. With a *Gazette* coupon for a ticket any one who came first was entitled to the best seats, but the crowd that usually paid for orchestra chairs walked in and took them as usual. The peanut gallery crowd went straight to the places they were accustomed to though there was not an usher in sight. When people got to crowding the aisles the fire department cleared them out. Deering ordered the windows opened for it was a clear, balmy night and boys climbed up from the outside to peer in. That was better fun for them than a good seat. Before the evening was over Jeff deserted us. I thought he had gone behind the scenes, till I saw him perched on a window sill opposite with his legs hanging down inside.

Deering got together all the talent within twenty miles and the show he put up was really worth money, even if it was amateur. Eben Hike's wizard feats are as clever as plenty I have seen at a vaudeville house in Washington; and when our Presbyterian choir sang the sextette from "Lucia" they brought down the

house. Mary Morris gave impersonations and young Selah Hinds did a clever Rube turn. Between each act they flashed returns on a screen. The news came in slowly at first, for the second district covers considerable territory. Between each set of figures, the magic lantern gave pictures of the candidates. The audience was a good-natured one and not very partizan, so it seemed to me.

An old portrait of Major Holbrook, taken when he came home from the war, had been made into a lantern slide. That brought the audience to its feet, yelling at the top of its voice. You could n't have told it was the major. He looked like a dozen pictures of soldier boys we have in a little album, standing stiff as pikes and gripping tight to the staff of a flag. That came with the news of a big vote polled for the major in his home town. Of course we expected he would carry his town and perhaps his county, still I began to feel anxious. I never was able to carry figures in my head for any length of time but it seemed to me the major's vote must be piling up. I whispered that to Parson Millard who sat next to me. He shook his head and smiled, but I could see him start when the next figures they flashed on the screen were a good sized vote for the Democrats. That was followed, however, by the Keith Centre and Wolverton count. Almost the entire vote went for Lem, and the house shouted itself hoarse.

After that the man behind the lantern began to run out pictures of Lem. A Wolverton boy had been in Washington through the winter and one day he

followed Lem all the way home, snap-shotting him at every turn. Once he was walking with Senator Trent. They were both holding on to their hats, while they stood at the foot of the Capitol steps and the wind switched their coat tails about in lively style. Then he caught Lem stopping to buy a paper of a little newsie, a few steps further on he slowed up to look at a bulletin board, once he swung on to a street car, another time he was beside a peanut stand munching popcorn. He snapped him one Sunday in a silk hat and frock coat hurrying down Connecticut avenue. The house yelled over that. Wolverton had never seen Lem togged out; it does not stand for a silk hat, unless at a wedding or funeral.

After that vaudeville acts and magic-lantern pictures filled up the gaps, because returns from outlying corners of the district came in slowly. Cecily Sterns was on in front of the curtain singing "The Lorelei," when a boy came to the box and whispered that Mr. Shipe wanted to see me back of the scenes. I stepped in at the narrow stage door. Behind it stood Deering with his hand on Lem's arm.

"What 's the matter?" I asked. Lem looked as if he had lost his last friend.

"I 'm trying to make your husband brace up," cried Deering in his hearty way; "he thinks the battle 's lost now. Why, it 's only nine o'clock — returns won't be in yet, enough of them, I mean, to let us guess at his majority for an hour or two."

Lemuel began to walk up and down the stage while he tugged at his mustache. It was lonesome and

gloomy in the big, empty space. The only people behind the scenes were Allen and two or three committee men. They were hanging round a small table where a telegraph operator sat before an instrument which kept up an incessant click. The table was strewn with sheets of paper. Allen had a bunch of them under his hand; he was adding figures rapidly and comparing them with others in a small notebook.

"The biggest slump 's in Adams County," I heard him say. "It gave Shipe 700 of a majority last election. It 's dropped to 67. We had n't reckoned on that. Gentlemen, it 's a damned, big cut."

The men beside him looked grave, though they put on laborious smiles when they jumped up to speak to me.

"Keith County gave your husband a magnificent majority," said Allen cheerfully; "don't you think so?"

I nodded. "Yes, it was fine but are n't the other counties cutting it down?"

"Not appreciably," said Deering.

"Take these figures, gentlemen," called the operator imperatively—"Craig County, for Holbrook, 46; Anderson township, for Holbrook, 35; Lapwing County, for Shipe, 68; Cottonwood, for Shipe, 10."

The man read off the figures with a quick staccato voice. Returns were coming in over the wire so fast he could scarcely keep up with them. He wrote them on slips of paper, which the men were fairly pulling out from under his hand before the last figure had been jotted down. Above the click of the instru-

ment I heard Cecily's piercing soprano voice. I listened to the words:

> But hand in hand we 'll go,
> And sleep the — gither at the foot,
> John Anderson — my Jo.

"That 's the last verse," I whispered to Deering; "she 's had three encores, I doubt if they give her another."

"Yes, I know," he cried impatiently, then he turned to a speaking tube.

"Burnham, run out that lot of slides of Shipe's," he said, "when he was campaigning through Lapwing. Keep them going till you have more returns, I 'll get a bunch of them across to you in three minutes. And say, don't give us any more Holbrook pictures; use Trent or the President, and Washington or Lincoln at intervals as you have to."

"Yes, sir," came a whisper through the tube.

Deering turned to me before he went back to the table.

"You can help us if you will, Mrs. Shipe," he said. "Returns are coming in so fast now we have to hustle to keep up with the wire. All you 've got to do is to scrape out the figures on these blackened slides."

I slipped off my gloves and worked steadily for ten minutes, while small boys waited to rush the slides to the man behind the lantern. Lem worked as steadily as any of us. I looked over his shoulder once and I saw his forehead wrinkle anxiously. On the

slide he was scratching these figures, "Panola, 180 for Holbrook."

The wire went back to its steady, meaningless click, the operator leaned back in his chair and wiped his forehead, while we stood around in silence, listening to occasional outbursts of applause in front. Suddenly the enthusiasm waxed hot. Somebody yelled, "What's the matter with Lemuel Shipe?" and there was a clatter of feet stamping on the floor.

"For heaven's sake, what's that racket about?" said Deering. He left us and dashed out at the stage door. He came back a minute later with a queer smile on his face.

"Somebody gave that big majority for Holbrook, 555, over in Kershaw, to Shipe. Who scratched in that last slide?" he asked.

"I did — the 555," I confessed. "I thought I wrote Holbrook."

"It does n't matter," said Deering kindly and he patted my arm as he passed. "We 'll make it up before the night gets much later."

Lemuel went striding up and down the stage only stopping for a moment when he reached the table where the wire came in. For ten or fifteen minutes the operator sat idle. After the returns were exhausted, Davie Moseley went out to do a monologue. I was listening to the drawl of his voice when the imperative call of the wire began again and the men stood scratching figures on the glass slides. Lem leaned over the operator's shoulder, watching the news as it clicked out. The worn look began to clear away,

he turned with an eager smile when Deering clapped him on the back.

"It 's coming our way at last, Lemuel," said Deering, "you know we conceded Holbrook his own county and a few other bits of territory."

The enthusiasm grew almost wild as the lantern gave a few big returns. Lem was standing beside the telegraph table when Deering came and dragged him toward the curtain.

"They 're yelling for you in front; come and make a speech. After that we 'd better run out a 'good night' slide and let folks go home. It 's half past eleven."

I returned to the box. Lem stepped in front of the curtain. Red spots burned in his cheeks as if he had a fever. He made as good a speech as I ever listened to. Without conceding that he had been elected, he promised, what every politician promises so many times in his life, the best that is in him. He stood unfaltering for the Republican party, for its past, present and future. He swore his allegiance to the great West, to his district and most closely of all to the little community which had known him since boyhood. "To be your congressman for two terms," he confessed, "has been the pride of my life. If I go back it will be to work for you with larger vigor, more understanding and to help hold for our great West the high place which is her due in the councils of a nation. If I do *not* go back," Lem paused, "for you leave this house to-night without a full knowledge of who the victor is — if I do not go back, I thank

every man here and every man in the district who gave me his vote to-day. I thank him also for his trust and loyalty and love."

I stared at my husband through misty tears. I was thinking of temptations he had resisted, of the steady, hard work which had given him his place in the world, of his political ideals which were as high as any man's, of his intense patriotism and my heart fairly ached for him; somehow I could not shake off the feeling that defeat impended.

When applause began to die down, because of sheer exhaustion, the orchestra struck up, "My Country." Lemuel stood before the curtain resting his arm against the tarnished gold carving of the archway. The people rose to their feet. I think Lem's voice was the first to strike into words. It swelled to a great volume of sound, and they sang it through verse after verse, some of them with tears rolling down their cheeks. The man behind the lantern flashed on the screen "Good night" and the house began to empty. People crushed into the box to offer congratulations. Nobody seemed to have a thought of anything except that we had won. The Millards offered to take the children home with them till morning, so they kissed me good night, and I went back to stay with Lem till the last return came over the wire.

There were long silences broken by nothing but the meaningless tap-tap of the instrument. I felt a shiver of dread every time the operator bent over to interpret its clack. Returns seemed for ten minutes at the

time to be bunched, either for Lem or against him. The men sat quietly computing figures and comparing them with those of former elections. About twelve o'clock everything looked hopeless. Randolph County had turned in a big majority for Holbrook and Lem without a word was pulling on his overcoat. The instrument went on with its tapping and the operator, who was a boy that had gone to school under Lem, rose slowly as if to join the condolence other men were offering. He fairly leaped back to his chair and shouted, "Vittoria goes Republican by 205." Lem tossed down his overcoat and joined the group by the table. It seemed as if everything brightened immediately. Half an hour later Garfield County gave a large majority for Holbrook.

"Cheer up, old man," cried Deering, "there are three other counties to hear from yet, besides you never saw an election in your life where figures had n't to be revised."

"Don't," cried Lem beseechingly, "don't; I 'm licked, and know it."

About two o'clock the operator said good night to the other end of the wire. Everybody had gone home except Deering, each one conceded defeat. Deering seemed to feel as badly as if the blow had fallen on himself, though in his bluff, genial way he declared for victory till the last figure came in.

"Don't, Bill," cried Lem, "for God's sake, don't. What 's the use? You know we 're licked out of our boots. It 's my fault and Allen's. We did n't put

up the fight we ought to have done. You don't seem to think of yourself; you 've got to lose the post-office."

"That don't count," answered Deering cheerfully; "what 's puzzling me is, how they won. It seemed a month ago as if you 'd have a regular landslide. The Democrats did n't have a hope then. The major knew it; he was kicking one day because he 'd dropped five hundred in a hole. That was all they could squeeze out of him. They had n't any money the first part of the campaign, then all at once they began to splurge, only they did it in a damned, foxy way. I don't understand where the money came from. Do you?"

"No," said Lem indifferently. "I don't."

We stopped at the gate of Deering's home on a side street. He was determined to go in and hitch a horse to take us home. Lem refused.

"I 'd rather walk, it 's a fine, warm night. How do you feel, Polly?" he asked.

"I 'd like the walk."

"Good night," said Deering; "and remember I don't give up the ship till the last gun's fired."

"Bill, don't be a fool; we 're licked."

Neither of us spoke as we walked through the sleeping town. Lem's wounds were too raw just then to be healed by words. The streets were black and silent, the lamps were little halos of misty light at long intervals. A dog barked at us once in a while but the world was so still our footsteps seemed to make a

startling noise on the wooden pavement. When we struck into the Gravel road, Lem tucked my arm into his, the sidewalk there is only four planks wide and it makes close quarters for two people. It grew darker out in the country and even more quiet than in town. Occasionally the chirp of a lonely cricket which had not realized the summer was over broke the silence, or the wind moved in the branches of the oak trees overhead. Our feet went scuffling through heaps of wind-drifted leaves. The damp, warm air was heavy with the odors of late fall; new plowed fields, dead-ripe apples on topmost branches, the sweetness of wild grapes which had been touched by frost; once when we passed Taylor's woods I noticed a whiff of witch hazel. The smoky odor of bonfires lay heavy on the damp air and as we turned in at our gate I smelt nasturtiums that were still blooming in Morehead's garden across the road. If it had been so pitch dark that I could not have seen my hand in front of me, I could have told every step of the way along the Gravel road, by the sweet country odors that met us. When we unlocked the front door the house seemed strangely lonesome. Lem struck a match and lit the hall lamp, then he stood looking down at me.

"Polly, if I had n't you, you and the children and a home, I believe I 'd have gone on a tear. I wonder what defeat looks like to a man who faces it alone!"

"Lem, this is n't defeat. It 's the beginning of life among our own people, where we belong."

He took my face between his hands and kissed me, but he did not speak. The old clock in the hall struck three. I lit a candle and turned out the lamp, then we went upstairs through the quiet house.

XXXV

WHERE THE BLOW CAME FROM

EARLY in the morning Jeff came racing over from the parsonage. He flung himself at me in his rough, boyish way, although I was just coming from the pantry with a tray full of dishes.

He was one large, beaming smile.

"Mother," he began, "is it true that father 's licked and you won't have to go East again?"

"Hush, Sonnie, don't let father know you 're so glad; he 's feeling pretty sore over it."

"We 're not, old Muddie," he whispered ecstatically.

"Hush!" I cautioned for I heard Lem coming down the stair.

Lemuel was as hurt as if the drubbing he received had been a physical one. He did not stir out of the house that forenoon. Folks kept coming and the 'phone rang incessantly; it seemed as if everybody in Wolverton wanted to condole with us. Every half hour, Deering called up to give late returns. Once the figures swung over so heavily to Lem's side that his hopes went up to G. After that he put on his coat and started for town. He promised to give me news as soon as he could and while I worked around the house I waited anxiously.

I had stayed awake thinking till daylight. Although

I wanted Lem to win because his heart was set on it, I kept longing for the certain news of defeat. I remembered hearing a senator's wife tell how she had spent twenty years in Washington; her husband had been promoted from the House to the Senate. My heart sank at the possibility of such an exile. Lem did not call me till the middle of the afternoon. I knew how things were going as soon as he said, "Is that you, Polly?"

"What's the news?" I asked.

"The major's elected. I've just 'phoned him congratulations."

"The returns are all in, then?"

"Not all; there's a scattering we have n't heard from, but it will only make his majority a bit larger. What returns have n't come in are from out-of-the-way places where the Democrats spent money like water."

"Whose money?"

"God knows," said Lem in a spiritless voice, "it's a mystery to us where the money came from to beat me. The hard part of it is, if we had worked and put a few hundred more into the campaign, I'd have won; the Major's majority's going to be a blamed small one."

"When are you coming home, Lem?" I asked.

"Pretty soon, I'm tired of having sympathetic poultices slapped on to me. Folks mean well, but, God! — I hate this funeral-wreath business."

"I'm coming down to the market, Lem. Wait in your office, won't you? I'll walk home with you."

When I went up the dark, narrow stair over Burke's hardware store, I heard voices in Lem's office before I opened the door. Hartley Allen was just leaving, he looked disgruntled. He passed me with a gruff "Good afternoon."

"What 's the matter with him?" I asked.

"He 's got a nasty grouch. He does n't blame me in so many words but he was n't pleasant. Allen probably dropped a couple of thousand into the campaign. Besides he has so many interests here, it 's going to be hard getting the legislation he wants out of the Democrats. It 's his own fault. I told him so. He made no such campaign as Brett did. He is n't the man Brett is anyway."

"Lem," I said slowly, "I 'm sorry."

He wheeled round in his chair and laughed harshly. "For Mercy's sake, Polly, don't bring in another funeral wreath — you, of all people. You 're not sorry."

"I 'm sorry — because it hurts you."

"But glad for your own sake?"

I nodded.

The door was thrown open and Senator Trent walked in. He greeted me in his hearty way then he turned to Lem, laid his hands upon his shoulders and swung him about till he faced the light.

"Shipe, I came over from Pipestem as quick as an auto could bring me. How did it happen?"

"You can search me," answered Lemuel abruptly.

The senator pulled a chair up beside the desk and seated himself. "I simply don't understand."

"Neither do I."

"Why, if I 'd thought of danger I 'd have jumped in and stumped the district for you. The major 's such a prosy old slap of ditchwater, I have n't bothered my head about him. It was n't his eloquence that caught folks. I heard him once try to talk. Such idiotic, tiresome flapdoodle I never listened to."

"Perhaps it was his war record."

"Lemuel, I never heard of any man taking off his hat to the major's war record. Did you?"

"No. It was n't anything the major did, that won, Senator. It was money."

"Whose money?"

"I 've been trying to figure that out all day. I can't."

"The major is no millionaire, and what he has he freezes on to like grim death."

"It was n't the major's money."

"Then whose was it? Have you any choice array of enemies to select from?"

"I can't think of any," Lem smiled grimly, "who would be willing to drop fifteen or twenty thousand just to lick me. That amount at least has been spent within the last week or two. We 've heard to-day from all corners of the district. The Democrats ran out big editions of the Panola *Chronicle* with a write-up of the major that must have given him a new view-point of himself. They covered the district with literature, darned good literature at that; they 've blown themselves on —"

"Come," called Lem as a knock at the door interrupted him.

Uncle Si Marks came in.

Lem jumped up to greet him.

"*You* 're not going to clap sympathy plasters on me, Uncle Si?" he cried.

The old man's genial smile is so infectious, it seemed to bring sunshine into the dull, little room.

"No. I 'm sorry you 're licked, Lemuel, and sorry we 're sendin' such a poor man East to represent us. Only, you know, I 'm terrible optimistic, even Pauline tells me that. Old Cowper says: 'My creed is, he is safe that did his best.'"

"The worst of it is, Uncle Si, I did n't do my best."

"'T wan't that, so much as that the other fellow worked in the dark."

"Did you see any of it up your way?" asked the senator.

"Wal, I reckon I did — somewhat."

"Tell us about it."

"Wal, the major 's fairly lived in an auto for two weeks. None of your wheezy, old, moss-grown autos, but a big, red tourin' car that come hikin' up the mountain without a puff of distress. He had a young chap along, the smoothest city proposition you ever see'd, white-skinned and fine-groomed. In less than ten minutes he 'd talk a good Republican into a dumb stupor an' make him believe he was a Democrat."

"He did n't work that racket on you, Uncle Si?" asked the senator with a laugh.

"No, siree. He come to see me jest once. I jabbed a pin in every soap bubble he blew, but I know more 'n one man over the mountain who 's always voted the Republican ticket that turned his coat yesterday. They handed out candy to the kids an' cigars to the men. There was free shows down at the town hall more 'n once an' nobody had to foot it this campaign to vote, nor hitch up either. Three big touring cars kept busy pickin' folks up all over the mountain from dawn till dark. You Republicans wan't offerin' junkets of that kind?"

"No," said Lem decisively.

"Then they sent out readin' to keep you busy evenin's. Folks near by me got the Panola *Chronicle* free for six weeks, an' big portraits of the major in his regimentals, fine enough to frame. There was something comin' in the mail for them every day of the week. That tickled them."

"Of course it did," said the senator. His brow wrinkled in perplexity.

"It 's beyond me." There was a weary tone in Lem's voice. "It 's unaccountable because I know the Democratic Congressional Committee was shy on funds. They could n't have done it. There is n't a Democrat in the district who has the money they spent or who would have spent it if he had. Besides — in an off year — why should the Democratic vote show such an increase?"

I sat watching the senator. He rose, walked quickly to the window where Lem sat and stood looking down at him.

"Shipe," his words came out as if each one was snapped off —"you said you had been all through any choice array of enemies you have?"

"Yes." Lem looked at him with a bewildered stare. "Yes, why?"

"There's nobody out here who would have put up such a big fight against you?"

"I can't think of a soul."

"Anybody in Washington?"

"No." Lem stared as if his thoughts were wandering about in a maze. "I never antagonized anybody to the extent of making them want a fifteen or twenty thousand dollar revenge."

"It isn't a person I'm thinking of — it's a corporation."

Lemuel came to his feet with a sudden jump and caught the senator by the arm. His face went red as a flame, then suddenly white.

"Hell!" he exclaimed.

Trent looked at him with sympathy shining in his eyes.

"My boy,"— the senator spoke with slow gravity. —"I know somebody ought to be sent to break stone in a jail yard for this — but he won't."

"I never dreamed of — them!" gasped Lemuel. "To think of reaching clear across a continent and breaking — a man!"

The look of utter amazement and fright died out of his eyes, then they blazed with rage.

"I'll take the law to them,"— he jerked out his words —"if I go bankrupt running them down."

The senator grasped my husband's arm but he broke away from him. He thrust his hand into the pockets of his trousers and strode with savage quiet up and down the little office.

"Don't you think I can take that cursed corporation and string it as high as Haman?" he asked fiercely, pausing in front of Trent.

"You can't do it. We may feel as sure of it as we are of death and the taxes, but that don't convict them. When anybody — a lone man or a corporation — undertakes a job like this, they don't leave even rabbit tracks you can trace them by."

Lem dropped into a chair and sat silent looking down into Main street.

Uncle Si Marks rose and stepped slowly across the room.

"Lemuel." He stood gazing down at my husband with a gentle smile lighting his eyes and spreading a radiance over his wrinkled face. "Lemuel, I reckon 't wan't exactly the thing to do, but I dropped in to-day to congratulate you. There 's lots of folks in Wolverton to-day congratulating themselves. Land sakes, Lem, we be willin' to mosey along the best way we can and send a poorer man to Washington, just to keep you an' Pauline and the young ones here with us!"

The lines of hatred and anger smoothed out in Lem's face as he looked up at the old man. He shook hands with him but did not speak.

"Good-by"— said the senator. He gripped the old

man's hands between his own. "Uncle Si, I 'd back your brand of optimism against all the Christianity in the country. It 's exactly what we need in sagging times like these."

XXXVI

THE LAST SESSION

OUR first thought after Lemuel's defeat was that he should go East alone for the short session. Spending the winter in Wolverton would have meant considerable economy, besides Jeff and Bob had started in school in September and the jump from one school to another broke in terribly on their studies. Lemuel did not recover quickly, however, from the sting of his defeat, and he dreaded the three months of homelessness in Washington. He had an idea that by getting close to certain big men and having me go out of my way to be nice to their wives he might land some kind of appointment. He wanted to take an expensive house or apartment in the northwest and splurge for a few months, giving Densie the gaiest season possible as some rich congressmen do for their daughters.

"People notice Densie everywhere," said Lem while he urged his plan. "She 's developed into a regular beauty. I don't know whether you 've thought of it or not, Pauline, but she 's acquired a style! Goodness knows where she got it! She never inherited it from you or me!" Then he laughed. "Densie can help us both socially."

I did not speak.

"Don't you know she can?" he persisted.

"Probably; but Lem, it seems a brutally commercial proposition — to advance yourself socially by rushing out a young girl for admiration."

"Nonsense," he cried hotly. "I 'm thinking of Densie herself. Perhaps it 's her last chance in a social circle. It might end in a brilliant marriage. She 's head and shoulders above any yap in Wolverton."

It is wasting breath to talk to Lemuel when he is in a "heady" mood. I might have argued with him till he was in a white heat, setting him absolutely against every plan I had and made life miserable. Instead I went ahead scheming in a quiet way for the short session in Washington and for housekeeping on as modest a scale as possible. We had saved very little money and I knew the expenses of the campaign must have been enormous. In fact Lemuel never dared to show me the figures. He had an idea that if he did not succeed in landing an appointment, he could drop back into practice with the opportunity of charging bigger fees than anybody else in Wolverton. No other lawyer in our county held the dignity of an ex-M.C. I doubted whether remarkable success awaited Lemuel at home. Half a dozen young men had set up quietly in the law business in Wolverton or in little towns near by. They were hard-working, earnest fellows who knew they faced a few tough years, only they were ready to face them bravely.

Lem even had thoughts of what he might be to his own State. The taste of power is like the first sip of champagne to some men. They want more. If the

power he hankered for had been actuated wholly by what he could do for his country, his State or his district, I would have helped with all my heart, only he was growing masterful and I feared the future. The boys' education would soon demand money, and a political income is a horrid uncertainty. It hangs on the favor of the people — or on wire pulling — and both of them that fall had brought many a man face to face with shipwreck.

When the wounds from defeat began to heal, Lemuel grew reasonable and took me back into a confidential partnership. We sized up future possibilities, reckoned our savings and at last he agreed to live as economically as possible during the last three months in Washington. We left Jeff with Aunt Margaret and rented an apartment near the Capitol. That meant a decrease in rent as well as in car-fare. Besides I could manage without a servant.

During the short session nobody did much in the way of entertainment. The families of some defeated members stayed at home and many who came were economizing. An enormous amount of work faced Congress and the beacon burned late night after night over the Capitol dome.

We grew accustomed to being called "lame ducks" and I met women here and there who were glad as I was over the prospect of going home for keeps. There were strenuous days ahead for the Republican party and it took a brave man to face the situation.

When we gathered at the Congressional Club, an afternoon meant a long recital of campaign reminis-

cences or else leave-takings and plans for the future.

"I 'll be delighted to go back to my lovely home and my own circle of friends," said the wife of an Eastern congressman, who was disliked as universally as he is.

"You put up a pretty stiff fight for anybody who is aching to go home!" suggested a Western woman caustically.

"That was a matter of principle. Being a congressman's wife is as boresome a job as I know. You are forced to spend every cent of your income and entertain folks you don't care a fiddlestring for. My husband says he would as soon put in his time tying strings in calendars as serve another term in Congress."

"Fudge!" the Western woman laughed.

"I can't imagine why a man wants to be a representative — there is n't much honor in being one of 400. Even when we 're home his life 's a burden. Half the time is spent in talking with folks who want an appointment. Why, they come swarming right into our house. Many a lie I 've told to get him away from them. Every time he appoints a postmaster he makes a dozen enemies, as for listening session after session to debates which are as interesting as a patent medicine ad — they would have to pay more than $7,500 a year to make me take the job!"

"I'm not making tart grapes out of our defeat," cried the Western woman briskly. "Robert and I have had a pretty good time out of our three terms here, even if we will enjoy home more than we ever

did before. I 'm sorry to leave Washington. It stands for a great deal we could not have had in any other way. We met people it was an inspiration and education to know. We have had opportunities for concerts, plays, lectures, and conventions such as we only dreamed of in our little town. The libraries, art galleries and museums have done a lot for me as well as for the children. Spring and winter in Washington are lovely while our home country is buried in snow six months of the year. I have found friends here who are worth keeping. As for my husband — even if he never did anything more than go home and spend the rest of his life running our tannery these six years in Congress have been worth while to him. I know that!"

She was right. I was eager to settle down again in the old home among old friends, still life in Washington had been worth while.

When I left the club that afternoon I walked down F street to do some shopping. Old Mrs. Eccles accompanied me. I had not seen her since spring for she went home with her daughter before Congress adjourned. She looked well and happy then, now she had a worn look, her eyes were tired and she seemed to have aged. I remembered that Eccles lost his nomination after a hard fight. The old lady wanted to talk. I have always liked her, she is plain and honest and true-hearted.

"You must come and see us soon," she urged; "we are nearly settled in our new home, it is clear out in the country."

"Why, have you moved?" I asked. "I thought you owned your house on H street."

"We did, but we've sold it." The tired, old face flushed scarlet. "You know we lived next door to Mathers. When he was in Congress and his wife was alive we bought those houses side by side — Cornelia Mathers and I had been friends since we were girls and folks who came to Washington from the same State drew closer together twelve years ago than they do now. Since Mathers went into the Senate he's been making all sorts of trouble for the party. This year he got clear away from everything a decent Republican stands for. He tried to win my husband over. There was no turning James around. That's how we lost. If it had been a decent contest where a man could have faced things and fought fair, we'd have had no hard feelings, only it was n't. One morning when James was reading the paper, it dropped from his hands — he laid his head on the table and cried. I had never seen him shed a tear since little Reuben died twenty-three years ago. I don't know what was in that paper, Rhoda and I never laid eyes on it. One thing I did see though, in Mathers' own paper; it was a cartoon with James and Rhoda and me gawking along Pennsylvania avenue hand in hand like three country rubes. Mr. Shipe lost too, did n't he?"

"Yes," I answered; my heart was aching for the old lady.

"I don't know what the country is coming to. The trouble seems to be spreading farther West all the time. I don't want to see anybody I care for suffer as

we 've done. Why, even the folks in our town, that we 've always known and neighbored with, turned clean against us. You would n't believe the scandalous stories they hatched up against James. We 're not going back there to live. We have more friends in Washington than out home. James says we 'll never set foot in the State again though both of us were born and raised there!"

"Have you sold your H street house?" I asked.

"Yes, we had a chance to sell it to a man with a perfect swarm of children. The senator hates young ones as most folks do hyenas. We 'd have given it away,— rather than go back there. Why, there was n't even a fence between us — only," a triumphant tone came into the old lady's voice, "only we stood on a higher lot than the senator did, and all those years he 's *had* to take our drippings."

XXXVII

THE PASSING OF A FRIEND

AFTER Lem's defeat we received hundreds of letters. They were kind enough and it was good to know that friends cared, still most of them wrote as if there had been a death in the family. They did not realize that I was not yearning for sympathy. I laid one letter away in a little drawer where I keep some treasures. It lies there yet. It came from Mrs. Daggett. She understood perfectly; a note of congratulation ran through it, instead of the condolence most people offered.

That year we spent Thanksgiving at Margaret's and came East just in time for Lemuel to be on hand when the House convened. Mrs. Daggett did not join her husband in Washington till Christmas was past. They had a gathering of their sons and grandchildren at their home in the country. Immediately after she came to town and opened their house to receive on New Years' Day. Lem called but I waited before going to see her, I knew she was too busy to be interrupted, till she got settled. She telephoned one morning and said she would see me Wednesday; they were to go to a dinner at the Fergusons' where we were invited. I looked forward eagerly to Wednesday, there was so much to talk about.

We arrived late; as soon as I had greeted our hostess, I looked about the room for the Daggetts.

"I am sorry," said Mrs. Ferguson. "They are not here. Mrs. Daggett was not well enough to come out."

"She is not seriously ill?" I asked.

"No, her husband 'phoned this afternoon. The doctor ordered perfect rest for a few days. A nurse answered my last 'phone. She said Mrs. Daggett was in bed, and not to be disturbed."

It was a small party and the group of women who gathered in the parlor round the coffee cups were singularly congenial, which is not the case at every dinner.

I was chatting with the wife of a prominent physician, when her husband came to the door in his hat and overcoat.

"Why, Phil, have you been called away?" she asked.

He beckoned to her and she left me. He spoke to her in a low tone then hurried downstairs. She stood leaning against a table for a moment with her back turned to us. Nobody spoke. A hush seemed to have fallen on each one of us. When she moved and sat down in the chair beside me, the tears rolled unheeded down her cheeks.

"Mrs. Daggett is very ill," she whispered. "When my husband left at seven o'clock she was fairly comfortable — she begged him to keep his engagement here. She sent her love to all of us. The nurse

'phoned a minute ago. She seemed in terror; Mrs. Daggett had suddenly grown worse."

We sat in utter silence. There was a strange stillness in the smoking-room, where a minute before men had been laughing and talking.

The front door downstairs slammed. We looked at each other with startled eyes as if we had been waiting for news, bad news, and the messenger had come. The footsteps hurried across the brick floor in the lower hall and a door closed with a muffled creak. Nobody came up the stair. The doctor's wife breathed a sigh of relief.

A woman rose and walked across the parlor. She parted the lace curtains and stood leaning her head against her arm. I could see past her out into the square. A tall magnolia grew close to the house. On its broad, glossy leaves the snow was piling up in white, fleecy ridges. There was not enough wind stirring to disturb one soft flake. My heart seemed to have grown suddenly numb. I felt no terror or grief or anxiety. I was going over in my mind every step of my friendship with Mrs. Daggett, that steady, warm, understanding friendship. The last time we met she spoke of not having written and I was telling her that people who understood each other as completely as we did could go for years without letters.

Her face lit up. "You are one of the few women I know," she said, "who comprehend."

"Do you know what your friendship is like — to me?" I asked. "It is like a warm, quiet, cheerful,

firelit room, where the door stands unlatched. Any time I wish, when it grows lonesome outdoors or if I am chilled, or if suddenly I want human sympathy, I know I can open the door and come in."

She laid her hands upon my shoulders, looked into my eyes and kissed me, but did not speak.

Gradually the numbness wore away. Instead there was an ache in my heart and a nameless terror. Her home was only a square away. I longed to stand beside her, to do something, perhaps merely take her hand if she needed a friend's hand, there was nothing I could do but wait, as the others were doing.

Mrs. Ferguson spoke, as if it were her duty as hostess to step in at a painful pause.

"The last time I saw Mrs. Daggett," her voice broke huskily, "was — Wednesday. We went to make some calls together. Just before we came home we stopped at the Vice-President's house. We paused a moment and were waiting for the door to open when I noticed a girl standing at the foot of the steps. Evidently she wanted to go into the house. She hesitated and turned away, she felt we had noticed her.

"'She's a stranger,' said Mrs. Daggett, 'and in some sort of perplexity; wait a minute.'

"She ran swiftly down the steps, the girl was hurrying away. Mrs. Daggett laid a hand upon her arm and stood a moment talking with her. She followed shyly up the steps. Mrs. Daggett had learned her name and introduced her to me. A few months before I made a round of calls with her, when a famous writer was her guest. The deference she showed to

a woman upon whom every one in Washington showered honors, was no greater than the courtesy she gave to that awkward, badly-dressed girl. She was a farmer's daughter. The Vice-President lived ten miles from her home and she had anticipated even more than a visit to the White House, the honor of meeting his wife and a glimpse of his home.

"'You see,' she explained shyly, 'he's almost a neighbor, we live so near his town. We know folks who know him and they 'll all ask if I went to the Vice-President's.'

"For half an hour, the girl was a guest of honor in that house. She had a little visit with the Vice-President's wife, then Mrs. Daggett took her about introducing her to women who treated her with the gentle courtesy she did herself. It was raining when we left the house so she drove her home to a little hotel on the avenue, where she was staying. Before we said good-by, she had arranged to take her next day to the Senate to meet the Vice-President."

"That," it was the doctor's wife who spoke, "is just like the things Mrs. Daggett was doing every day of her life. My husband has known her for twenty years; he says she has done more real missionary work in that time than any church in town. If you knew some of the stories he tells. Oh, I can't speak of them."

The woman who stood beside the window, dropped the curtains together and came back to the circle about the hearth. The hostess pushed a chair toward her. She sat down pulling it close to the fire as if she were

cold. She was a congressional woman, from the Southwest. I had met her frequently and heard Mrs. Daggett speak of her in a fond, tender way. She was quiet and reserved although there were times when she became suddenly intimate if one touched a subject that interested her. Sometimes when an eager, youthful expression came into her face, it made me think she might be younger than she seemed, her snow-white hair led one to imagine she was past fifty. Her body was youthfully slender and the beautiful simplicity of her gowns accentuated the look of girlishness I had noticed about her.

"The other day," the woman began to speak in a quiet, steady tone, "I was searching for something in an old trunk. I found a photograph of a woman I once knew. She came here sixteen years ago when her husband was elected to Congress. Her home had always been in a country town, one of those raw, fresh-cut little towns, where nothing is beautiful or homelike. She had been longing all her life to get away from it, still she dreaded to come to Washington. One reason was, she had a terror of facing new people. Her mirror told her everything was against her. A woman cannot spend her young years in hard, grinding work without losing her freshness and something else — perhaps it is the eager, hopeful look that vanishes so soon. The eyes which stared back at her from the mirror were full of hopeless dismay.

"Besides, she was growing bald. We don't give a thought to a man growing bald. When a woman begins to find bare spots on her head, it is the last stroke

of fate. She tried to wear a wig. You never saw a wig that came from a country hair emporium, did you? She wore it bravely. She had her photograph made in it. After she came to Washington, her mother kept begging for a picture. The photographer treated her as humanely as he could. When I looked at that picture yesterday, it brought tears to my eyes, I pitied the woman so. She wore a gown which did not fit. I remember it was a bright green satin and the bias folds were not put on straight. She wore a necklace of jet beads and a large bow on her head. That first season in Washington was almost a tragedy to her, if the cruel pin-pricks women inflict — sometimes without knowing it is cruelty — can be called a tragedy. Her husband was not aging. He seemed to be growing younger, although he was six years older than she was. He began to achieve certain ambitions he had dreamed of since his youth. He was throwing all his energy and heart into his work — he loved it and he loved the life, even the frivolous side of social life appealed to him. He made a speech in the House which gave him the reputation of an orator. His wife became accustomed to seeing him in the center of a group where bedizened women showered smiles and honeyed words upon him till he glowed with the pride of achievement. One night she sat watching him in the midst of such a circle. He turned eager and flushed to look about the room. His eyes met hers and the rapture faded instantly from his face. Her husband's eyes were as tell-tale as the mirror. She began to invest in wigs, in a terrible effort to make

herself presentable. One day — you will scarcely believe that a human being could be so cruel — a woman told her that she was spoken of as 'the lady who had five wigs and one gown.' After that she refused to go anywhere. She stayed in the house moping her life away and begging to go home. One day Mrs. Daggett called on her. That was the beginning on Mrs. Daggett's side of a steady friendship and on the woman's side of such worship as rarely comes into a life. With the gentlest tact and rare understanding she taught her how to dress. She put her in the care of a reputable hairdresser, and before a year passed, she laid wigs aside forever. It seemed like a miracle but her own hair was beginning to grow; it came back in soft ringlets like a child's, youth returned, because life was happier and she was gaining self-confidence. One day Mrs. Daggett sent out cards for a reception, and this woman was her guest of honor. Everybody came, Mrs. Daggett's closest friends, also the throng which had snubbed her. After that day she took the place — which belonged to her."

Nobody spoke. The woman stood gazing down into the fire.

"You understand now," she said in a low voice, "what her friendship has been to me — during these sixteen years."

"To you?" said our hostess.

"Yes." She dropped into a chair and began to speak in a strange, toneless voice. "You hear of kind things she has done — you love her for her loyalty, her gentleness and her generous heart — I can-

not put my love for her into words — it seems too —" She rose and went back to the window.

While we sat in perfect silence the imperative call of the telephone rang through the still house.

I turned quickly to look at the woman beside the window. She stood watching the door. Footsteps came along the hall, our host stopped, a man came from the smoking-room to meet him. They stood in the hall, just outside the door. Mr. Ferguson did not speak for a moment, somehow we all understood; then he said,

"Mrs. Daggett — has gone."

The woman beside the window turned and groped her way across the room with a low, shivering cry. It did not sound like a human cry.

"Pauline," said Lem gently as we drove home through a whirling snow-storm, "Polly, dear, I wish I could think of something that would sound like comfort. Nothing I can say seems to fit."

I gripped his hand tightly. Moments come into our lives when speech is sadly meaningless.

XXXVIII

OLD GEORGIE'S PHILOSOPHY

THE days fairly crept during that last winter in Washington. It seemed certain the President would call an extra session and the people who had won out were booked for nobody knew how long a stay in the hot city. Then every paper held forth on the terror of hard times. It did not worry us, there was plenty and content on the farms of the West.

While I walked home one day from a farewell tea at the Congressional Club, I did a lot of thinking. Some of the wealthy women had been discussing the future as it looked to them. One woman complained that hard times had already arrived.

"Why!" remarked somebody who sat beside her, "I imagined you had everything that heart could wish for."

"Well, hardly," was the reply. "John gave up our special car this spring. He says he can't afford it. I had my heart set on a yacht — that's cut out! We planned a trip to Japan, my husband says it is out of the question because Japan is getting horribly expensive. Two gowns were all I could afford this spring from Paris. Before you pay duty on things nowadays, you go broke."

And yet I was perfectly happy, simply because we

were going home in time to watch green things leaf out and see the apple trees burst into blossom round the little house in Wolverton.

When I opened the door I heard old Georgie singing. I had no servant during that short session and Georgie used to come to clean. She was the best negro that ever worked for me, except Minerva. She looked like an ancient butternut, she was so old and withered, but she was honest and worked well.

She was singing a hymn I knew by heart; she sang it so often:

De Mighty One 's a-comin' wid buckler an' wid sword,
De angel trumpet 's soundin' fer de comin' uv de Lord,
Fer de comin' uv de Lord,
De angel trumpet 's soundin' fer de comin' uv de Lord.

"How much do you earn a week, Georgie?" I asked, while I paid her wages.

"Lawd, now, Miss Shipe, I jes' can't reckon, sometimes it 's five dollahs,— one wintah when I wukked fer a sick lady, steady, I made seven dollahs a week. But — thar 's so many a-lookin' fer wuk now it 's harder,— considerable harder. Las' week, I made four dollahs."

"What does it cost you to live?"

"Well, thar 's a dollah a week fer mah room an' I don't need a great deal uv coal, only bein' home nights. Gen'rally I git two meals out, some places I git mah breakfas' an' ef I stay late mah dinner — but allus one meal in the middle uv the day. Then folkses give me things, clothes an' shoes an' hats, mos'ly they

fit me, A 'm so small, ye see. Las' month, one lady give me a right smaht opera cloak, pink with a white-satin linin'. Lawd, I cut a dash with it las' Sunday to church. I went in late, even the preachah, he stopped to look." Then she went off into an exuberant giggle.

"And you are happy, Georgie?" I asked.

"Lawd, yes, Miss Shipe, I 'se happy; why should n't I be happy? I was jes a-thinkin' uv that yesta-day, when I was a-wukkin' fer Miss Lowrie down on Florida avenue. Thar 's a lady — she 's richer 'n pink mud, and yit she ain't happy! She 's got everything, diamonds an' velvet rugs and picters on her wall an' clothes! Lawd, Miss Shipe, you never seed sich a closet full uv clothes as that lady has, an' yit she ain't happy; she 's lonesome as Heck."

"How do you know?"

"Gawd-a-moughty! How can I help knowin'? She talks right foh me. What does she care foh me — an ol' black niggah like me? She tells folks how she hates her husband an' wants ter be free. Lawd, I did n't uster mosey along none too easy with my ol' Polydore, he drank somethin' powerful. Once't I bought a flannel petticoat I paid fifty cents fer it, it was embroidered puffectly beautiful. It went all to pieces the fust time I washed it. After that I used it fer a scrub rag. I did n't say a wud about it ter nobuddy. I 'd picked out a bad bargain with mah eyes wide open. I reckon I did 'bout the same when I took Polydore but — thar' wan't no use uv bellyachin' 'bout it, I jes' kep still an' took mah medicine."

The little old negro plumped down her scrub pail beside me with a thud that sent the water splashing over the floor.

"Every time I hear Miss Lowrie a-talkin' so, I think to myself, Lawd, it 's plumb ridiculous to have all that money an' yit — not be happy!"

"Georgie, do you know," I asked, "that you are a philosopher?"

She was wringing out her scrub cloth when I spoke. She looked up and shook her head reproachfully.

"Lawd, no, Miss Shipe — have I wukked for you all this time an' you not know I 'm a Baptist?"

XXXIX

THE WELCOME HOME

WE started for home a few days after Congress adjourned. I fancied the spring had come early that year in the South but as soon as we began our journey across the continent, we found it growing green everywhere under blue sunny skies. We ran through drifts of old, grimy snow here and there in the Middle West. Sometimes we looked down from a bridge upon a frozen river, but oftener we saw patches in fields where the grass had begun to wake up and birds were coming back to the Western forests. Lem felt a strange reluctance about going home. He spoke of it once as ringing down the curtain on his political career. Although I tried to hide my feelings, I felt foolishly happy at the mere thought of going back just in time to see green things thrust their heads up in the yard, to watch the orchard leaf out and blossom. During our four years in the East there had been no long summer recess. When there was no long session there was an extra one and they had dragged on into the breathless days of Washington's hot summer. We had dreamed twice of leaving town on March fourth, but till defeat came, it ended in dreaming.

Our train rolled into Wolverton late in the afternoon. We had wired to Margaret and Brett and the

Millards and Deering what train we were on and we expected to be greeted by a few old friends. We stood on the platform watching for the first glimpse of the home town; you come on it suddenly when you swing around and leave the forest behind. While the cars slowed up, Lem stood peering forward from the lowest step. Suddenly he looked up at me with a smile that illumined his face.

"Polly, I believe the whole blamed town is here to meet us. They are cheering. Listen to the band."

A minute later our train went puffing through a crowd that shouted and waved and swung hats high in the air. Lem turned with a look in his face I had never seen before. Tears stood in his eyes and his chin quivered.

"Pauline, think of them doing this for a man who comes home licked! You look for colors flying when you win out, but not when you 've been skinned alive!"

The train was still moving slowly when hands were thrust up to catch hold of ours and men leaped beside us to the platform. Brett lifted little Bob from the lower step and carried him off high among the crowd perched on his shoulder. Jeff's arms were round my neck clutching me till I nearly choked and I saw a group of young folks struggling through the mob to greet Densie. There were so many dear faces all about us and so many hands thrust up in greeting that I stood for a minute bewildered. I saw William Deering help Lem into his big, open drag. Densie and Bob jumped in beside him. Aunt Margaret and Jeff and I were piloted to the parson's carriage.

The horses did not stir. They could not have moved if a driver had urged them to; they were wedged into the crowd, which shouted and fluttered handkerchiefs. On a high bank above the station a line of small boys, who were Bob's friends, stood waving cheap little flags and blowing horns. Somebody stilled their noise as the band struck up. Lem threw back his head with a shout of laughter when he recognized the tune, "Lo, the Conquering Hero Comes." They played it lustily. After a few bars, Job Eaton broke out into a piercing cornet solo, which lasted for a minute or so, then the snare drums tattooed a chorus. I had never heard so much noise from a dozen instruments. When the music ceased, the cheering broke out again, and the small boys went back to their tin horns. From a bunch of Jeff's friends on the edge of the crowd came a wild "Zip I Adee, I Aye." Lem jumped to his feet and the clamor ceased instantly. He stood bareheaded with his hand on Deering's shoulder. He tried to speak but choked,— then he flung back his head and laughed.

"Old friends and neighbors and schoolmates and — everybody," he began, "I 've got to confess you have taken me — as well as the rest of my family — off our feet. We expected half a dozen people here to meet us with the old friendly smile and a welcome hand clasp, but we never dreamed of being greeted by half of Wolverton. As I stand here looking down on a throng of faces and see scarcely one that is strange to me, I am feeling from the bottom of my heart that I would rather have this welcome than have won a

victory on November eighth. Why? Because every victor is met by a brass band and red fire simply because he is the victor. It counts and it gladdens the heart and adds to the joy of victory, but to the man who has met defeat, it stands for the same old love, grown a trifle stronger, the trust and faith and loyalty, the shoulder-to-shoulder brotherhood which we must have to make our country — this great Western Country — what we would fain have it, the most glorious, contented, prosperous spot in the United States of America. I want to say a few words to the band, Why, I know every man in it from good John Carter with that inspired baton of his, down to little red-headed Sankey Page behind his snare drum. Boys, I have listened to great bands all over the East, to Victor's and Sousa's and Pryor's bands, to orchestras so big whole rows had to be ripped out from a theater before the men could be seated. I have listened time and again to the Marine Band, with its scarlet uniforms glowing under a thousand lights at the White House. Each one of them can play, play the heart out of you sometimes, or play so you grow bold enough to march into battle, but I tell you what it is, boys, not one of them touched me as you did a few minutes ago. No music I ever listened to compares with the melody the little Wolverton band brought out of its instruments this afternoon. Here I stood choking and with tears in my eyes. There are a few times in life when a man confesses without shame to weakness like this. The tears were rolling down my cheeks when you made a Conquering Hero of a Lame Duck. Friends, I am no

conquering hero, but all the way West one thought has come surging up in my heart, that a man may live as useful and happy and loyal a life in his own little home town, among his own folks, as off in the turbulent world of the East. I 've come back a plain citizen, one of you! I 'm no longer your congressman. I want you to take us back to your hearts, my wife and children and myself as old friends and good, loyal neighbors."

Margaret sat gripping my hands between her own, while we drove slowly through Main street in the midst of a trampling procession led by the band which was playing every patriotic air in its repertoire.

"I used to wonder," said Margaret with a ripple of laughter, "how the gorgeous ladies in a circus parade felt while they went through town on their high-stepping horses. I believe I know now! But, Pauline," she added softly, "if I 've got to head Lem off myself, they 'll never send him to Congress again. You can't know how we missed you, each one of you!"

XL

"EAST, WEST, HAME'S BEST"

I HAVE come to the end of my story or is it the beginning?

I am writing these last few pages under a great butternut tree at the edge of the orchard just before the east pasture slopes down to Duck Creek. There was a big baking to do so I spent the morning in the kitchen. A breeze came blowing through the house and it was not uncomfortable, even beside the stove. I set the loaves and cake to cool on the window ledge then I hung up my apron and came out here alone. I felt like a child going off for a holiday. I did not even put on a sunbonnet. The warm sunshine on my head felt pleasant and as I came through the orchard, the yeasty smell of hot bread followed me, for I had left the kitchen door open.

Unless you have lived in a great city with a longing which is almost a constant ache for wide country spaces, you cannot understand what our home-coming meant to me.

In the little apartment-house kitchen in Washington — it seemed sky high, six stories up in the air — I generally worked by the open window. There I had air and sunshine even if there was nothing to look down upon but gray slate roofs, brick walls and hard

asphalt streets. The pounding of horses' feet, the whiz of automobiles, and the clang of street cars went on so ceaselessly that unless I stopped to listen I scarcely heard the hubbub.

To-day I fairly felt the difference. While I stood by the table at the window the breeze came in lightly so it merely moved the sash curtains. A few late bumblebees droned in the sunshine, I heard the tinkle of cow-bells off in the pasture and the crickets kept up an incessant chirp. There is a joy in doing the kitchen labor of a little home while you look out on trees and grass and wide still fields, which no woman knows unless she has done it — I mean done it with her heart in the work.

Lem asked yesterday when I was going to get a servant.

"A servant, Lemuel?" I laughed; "no more servants for me!"

It is useless to try and make a man understand the mere physical content a woman takes in making home the most desirable place she knows. Why, until this summer I had not canned fruit since Lemuel was elected. We could not transport crates of fruit jars across a continent. During the summer in Washington I ached to put up beautiful luscious fruit I saw in the Center Market but I held on to myself because we never knew how we might live during the next session. This summer I let myself go — and canned everything as it ripened. I felt as if I could not stop. Sometimes the fruit lapped — then I sent Jeff to Pugs-

ley's in haste for more cans. Or the cans lapped — and I waited eagerly for more fruit to ripen. There is nothing left now except quinces. Two bushes beside the gate are loaded with big, green-gray, fuzzy quinces, which will turn yellow after a touch of sharp frost, though Lem threatened yesterday to cut down the bushes. He said he could not think of any other way to interrupt my preserving fever. Still he is as fond of jam and jellies as Bob is. Last night when I emptied a can of red raspberries for supper, he sniffed as soon as he came in the door, the aroma of them had gone all through the house.

"My! these smell good, Polly," he said. "I like supper better than dinner at night. For one thing, there never seemed to be a meal that fruit fitted into as it does for supper."

Jeff built a seat around the trunk of the big butternut tree early in the summer and we have spent a good many days out here. School opened to-day and the children went back to their studies. Densie is off driving to Cottonwood with the Millards. Lem is at his office, so I am all soul alone.

I suppose I have seen other fall days as pleasant as this is, but I cannot remember them. The year is hardly far enough along yet for Indian summer, still this seems like an Indian summer day. The sky is a hazy, warm blue and the trees over on the hillside are beginning to turn red and yellow or these warm browns which are almost as beautiful as the green of summer. The fields have faded but down in the hollow

one can guess how far the moisture soaks up from Duck Creek — by the bright, lushy green of the grass and the tall reeds.

George Eagle has been working round the place for a week. He is off now in the lower field plowing. I can hear him call old Dolly once in a while to get a move on her. That is the harshest thing George ever says to the brown mare. Afterwards he breaks out in a merry whistle. George's choice of tunes makes me smile every time he dashes into a new one. They are all warlike, though he is so gentle he would turn aside to escape stepping on a worm. He broke into "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp," a while ago — then he tried "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" and "Just Before the Battle, Mother." He broke down in everything except "Onward." He can carry that serenely through to the end. Once he stopped in the middle of a bar and tramped to a corner of the fence where he keeps a water bucket. I saw him drink till he must have nearly emptied it. Then he started at the beginning and whistled the martial old hymn shrilly to the last note. On the Neal farm they are burning brush and dead leaves. The wind has died down and there is scarcely a breath of air stirring now so the smoke creeps up straight and blue but the spicy burnt odor comes floating over to where I sit. It is wonderfully still. Sometimes I hear the creak of wagon wheels along the Gravel road. The farmers from Panola are having their cider made at the old mill on Duck Creek and as they pass I smell ripe apples. Crickets and locusts keep up an incessant chirping,

only that does not break in upon the silence; it seems like part of it.

Yesterday Senator Trent came in and had dinner with us. Afterwards he came out here to talk with Lem and me. Lemuel was called indoors for a little while, somebody wanted him on the 'phone. We watched him tramp through the orchard to the house, then the senator asked suddenly.

"How does it seem, Mrs. Shipe, to be home for good?"

I laughed. He did too. Then he lifted the hat from his head and ran his fingers through his thick, iron-gray hair.

"It seems almost — heavenly, to go through a fall without thinking of an election."

The senator chuckled.

"You have n't any hankering then — for Washington?"

"Not a hankering."

"Still, you may be called to go back there, one of these days — when Lem is ready. He has a bit to learn yet. But — I would rather see him take my place than any man I know."

"He filled the bill then?" I asked eagerly.

"He filled it — as only an honest man could do. His failure was his triumph. He proved one thing that I 'm always preaching no matter what these ruffian muckrakers say — there is no honester, more incorruptible body of men in America than the Congress of the United States. I went to Washington eighteen years ago. During those years I have seen a few fall

and a few corrupted whose misdeeds were never brought to daylight. Only they have been so few they were like — well — like that heap of winesaps under the tree. There may be one or two or three speckled apples in that wagon load, but it 's what you would call fine fruit — you don't see much finer."

He grew silent and sat watching George Eagle guide old Dolly up a long straight furrow.

"I don't know whether I should want to see Lem back there or not," I confessed. "I don't know whether he 's equal to it."

"Perhaps not yet — it won't hurt him to come home for a few years and live close to people. He will learn to know them better; know their problems and needs and ideals. It 's a good thing to work hard a while just for a living — and as for you —"

He turned and looked at me with a droll twinkle in his eyes.

"I believe you like Wolverton best —"

"I do — I love it!"

"Keep on loving it," he advised sturdily. "It 's the sort of place God meant people to live in."

Then Lem came out and they went away together.

I cannot guess at our future. Perhaps in the years ahead larger honors are waiting for Lemuel, larger opportunities and fame. He is not ready for them yet. I respected the straightforward honesty of the senator when he confessed to that. It will not hurt my husband to meet a little poverty and a fair measure of good, hard work. It is better for him at present

than the sort of toil that kept him pinned down when the beacon burned nights over the House of Congress. It is work that takes him abroad among humble people in country places, who need his help, his sympathy and beyond all his understanding. I do not wear it as a feather in my cap, because Lemuel and I are differently constituted, but I think I know people who live close to the earth better than he does and I love them better.

It seems to me that the first requirement of an American statesman is not so much oratory, genius or the power of leadership as close understanding and intimate friendship with the people he represents. That will come in time to Lem. He is getting it now. Every time he sits down to the table with George Eagle or when Peter Dunn drives him home from town, he is learning these things; that all the culture and brains and philosophy and wisdom of the country is not centered in a small band of men under the dome of the United States Capitol.

I find myself wishing, while I look out over the pleasant countryside and up to the peaks of our far-away mountains, for nothing more ambitious than this; that the pleasant, peaceful life might go on, with Lemuel and I growing old side by side, with grandchildren coming to gladden our hearts, and that we might watch them become men and women, filling nobly the places they make for themselves in this great Western country.

So far as I can see, the clean, open, fragrant coun-

try is better than the feverish cities of the East; besides I know for certain we belong here — among people who, thank God — are real!

THE END

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